THE END OF BRITISH RULE IN SOUTH ARABIA, 1959-1967

by

Calum Angus Macleod

Doctor of Philosophy

The University of Edinburgh

June 2001

Declaration

I declare that this thesis has been composed by myself and that the work has been my own. No portion of the work referred to in the thesis has been submitted in support of an application for another degree or qualification of this or any other university or other institution of learning.

Abstract

This thesis analyses British policy in the final years of colonial rule in Aden and the Aden Protectorate (South Arabia), the period 1959 to 1967. This work deals first with the first century of British rule in Aden, from the capture of the port in 1839 until the end of the Second World War in 1945, examining the role of the Colony in British overseas policy. Secondly, the thesis gives the international and regional background to the period in question by giving a summary of British overseas policy, the Cold War and the Arab Cold War in the period 1945 to 1967. Thirdly, it tackles the history of colonial rule between 1945 and 1959, covering the increasing value of Aden to British defence policy in the Middle East, as well as the creation of a Federation among the local rulers in an attempt to bolster Britain's closest allies in South Arabia. The fourth point of the thesis is the examination of British defence policy, 1959 to 1963, which saw the military base in Aden become vital to London's overseas policy. This period saw Aden merge with the Federation, against a background of opposition from Arab Nationalists, in an attempt to secure British interests. Fifthly, the thesis analyses the gradual loss of British control over events in Aden and the Federation as the Arab Nationalist campaign became increasingly effective. The British Government finally decided to grant independence to appease the opposition, but retain the base for the defence of Britain's overseas interests. The thesis then attempts to chart the rise of the eventual victors in the conflict, the 'Marxist' National Liberation Front and its rivalry with other Arab Nationalist groups. Finally, the thesis examines the final period of British rule in Aden, from the Defence White Paper of February 1966, when the decision was taken to cut many of Britain's overseas commitments, including the base in Aden, to the withdrawal of November 1967. This period saw the disintegration of the Federation and the inability of the British to prevent the Nationalists taking power. The thesis concludes that towards the end of colonial rule, British policy in South Arabia was incoherent and suffered from division among the different Government departments. Furthermore, the inability to protect the Federation effectively enabled the Nationalists to undermine Britain's only allies in the Protectorate.

Acknowledgments

I would like to express my gratitude to my supervisor, Dr. Paul Lalor for his excellent guidance and invaluable assistance during my research and writing of this thesis. I am indebted to Dr. Lalor for his supervision without which I would have found it extremely difficult to have accomplished the completion of this work. The help of Peter Hinchcliffe has also been extremely valuable, and I would like to thank him for his input and generosity in providing guidance for my research. I am also extremely appreciative of all the help I have received from other members of the Islamic and Middle Eastern Studies department at the University of Edinburgh, in particular the secretary Miss L. Scobie for her kind support.

The staff at the Public Record Office in Kew Gardens, London were also very helpful in assisting my research into Government documents and answering my inquiries. I am also very grateful to the staff at the Main Library at the University of Edinburgh for their help in my work. I must also express my immense gratitude to the staff of the Carnegie Trust for the Universities of Scotland for paying my fees during my time at University.

The information and time of various former Government officials is also warmly appreciated, as is the kindness of Dr. Paul Dresch for making time to meet me and giving me some insights into the situation in South West Arabia during the 1950s and 1960s.

I would also like to thank my parents for their support, without whom this thesis would not have been possible, and finally my wife, Fiona, for supporting me and providing encouragement when it was necessary and to whom this thesis is dedicated.

Note on Transliteration

The study of Yemeni history and politics can be confusing at times given the variety of spellings of different place names and persons. For the most part I have standardised the spellings to the most popular forms, such as Abdullah al Asnag, instead of al Asnaj, except in quotations where I have kept the spelling used by the author.

Maps

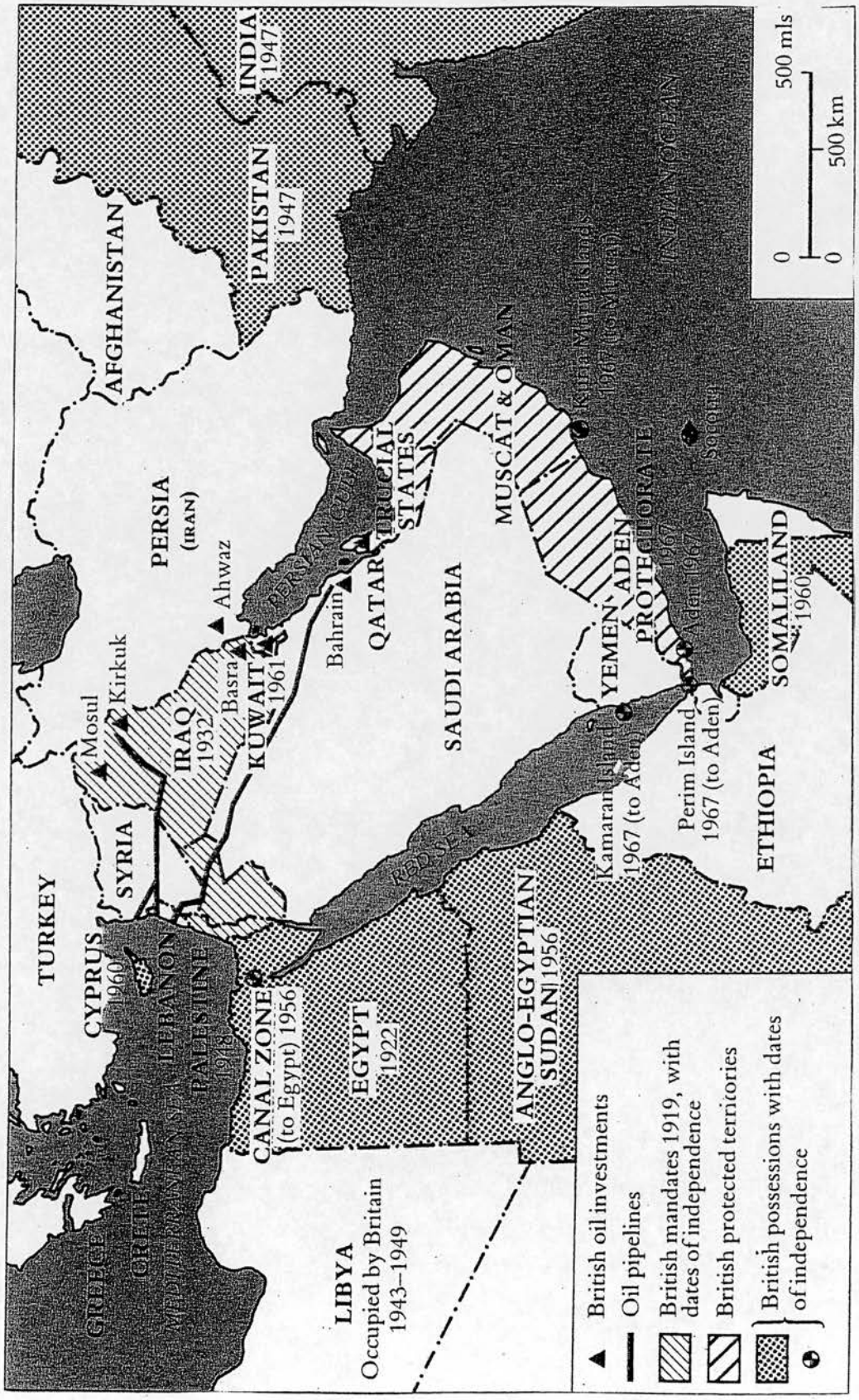
Abbreviations

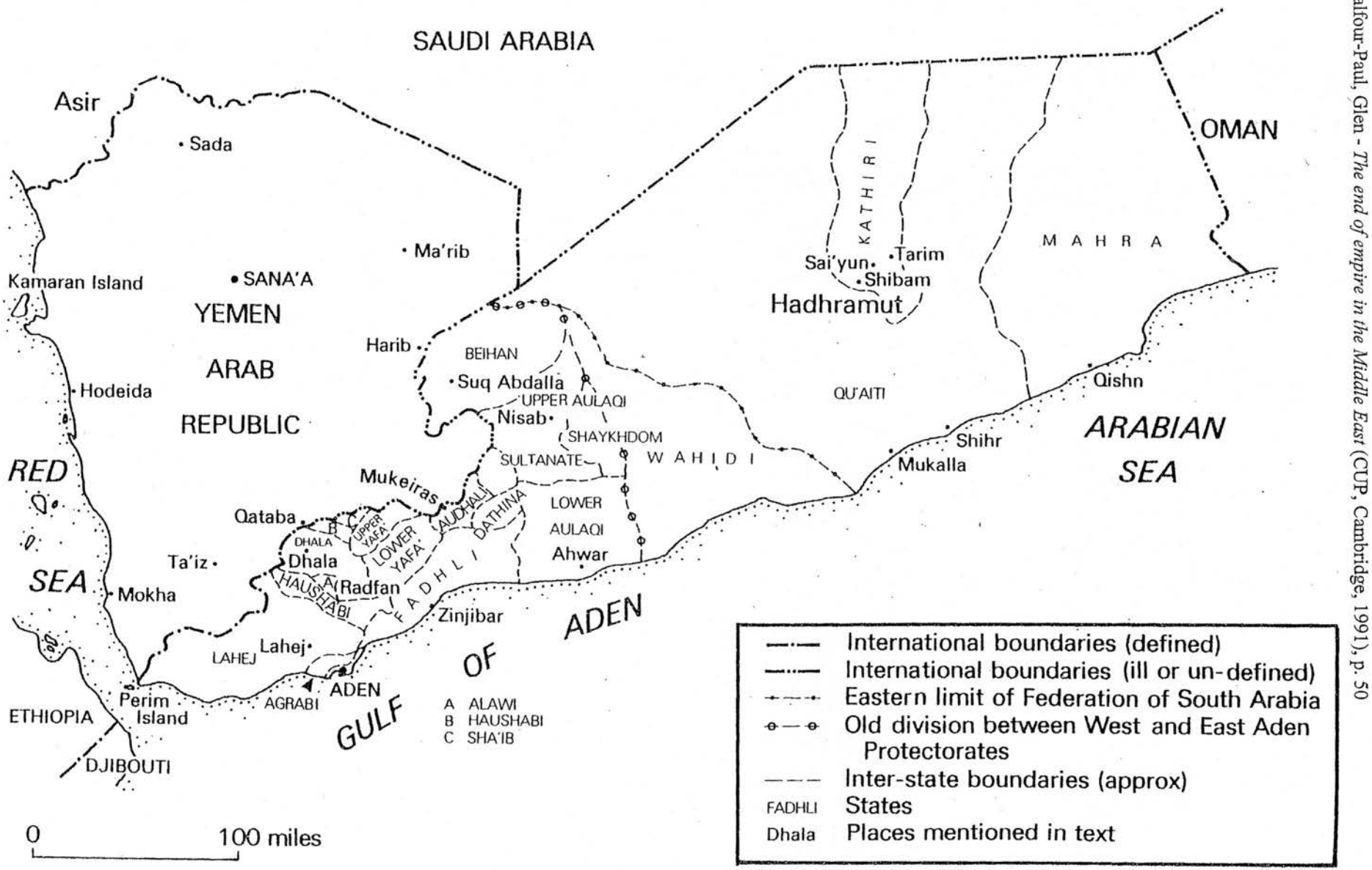
AA: Aden Association
ANM: Arab Nationalist Movement
ATUC: Aden Trade Union's Congress
BFAP: British Forces, Arabian Peninsula
CAB: Cabinet
C-in-C: Commander-in-Chief
CO: Colonial Office
CoS/COS: Chiefs of Staff
DEFE: Ministry of Defence
DOP: Defence and Overseas Policy (Cabinet Committee)
EAP: Eastern Aden Protectorate
FAAS: Federation of the Arab Amirates of the South
FLOSY: Front for the Liberation of South Yemen
FO: Foreign Office
FSA: Federation of South Arabia
FYM: Free Yemeni Movement
HQ MEC: Headquarters, Middle East Command
JPS: Joint Planning Staff
MOD: Ministry of Defence
NLF: National Liberation Front
OLOS: Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South
PCC: People's Constitutional Congress
PROSY: People's Republic of South Yemen
PSP: People's Socialist Party
SAL: South Arabian League
SAS: Special Airborne Service
UAR: United Arab Republic (Egypt)
UNF: United National Front
UNP: United National Party
WAP: Western Aden Protectorate
YAR: Yemen Arab Republic (North Yemen)

Table of Contents

Map 1: South Arabia and the Middle East[1]

[1] Reynolds, David - *Britannia Overruled* (Longman, Harlow, 1991), p. 351





South West Arabia on the eve of independence.

Map 2: South West Arabia on the eve of independence[2]

[2] Balfour-Paul, Glen - *The end of empire in the Middle East* (CUP, Cambridge, 1991), p. 50

Introduction

The ceremony to mark the handover of power from the British to a former colony was generally marked by the lowering of the Union Jack whilst 'God Save the Queen' was played followed by the raising of the newly independent state's flag. The case of Aden Colony and Protectorate was markedly different, the military band playing the then popular song 'fings ain't wot they used to be', an apt conclusion to the messy and confused final years of British rule in South West Arabia. Moreover, the transition of power was not from the colonial authorities to the local notable elite, the politicians and rulers who had co-operated with the British in ruling the country. Instead the new government was composed of the most hard-line nationalists, the National Liberation Front (NLF) who established the People's Republic of South Yemen (PROSY). This combination of a chaotic British withdrawal and handover of power to a 'Marxist' group of nationalists mark out the history of South Arabia after World War Two as an important exception to the pattern of withdrawal from empire elsewhere in the world. However, this is an exception that has to a large extent been overlooked by historians of the modern Middle East or the British Empire.

The Colony of Aden and the surrounding Protectorate was also largely overlooked by British politicians and policymakers in the first century of rule from 1839 to the 1950s. However, with the enforced withdrawal from other parts of the Middle East, in particular Palestine in 1947 and the Suez Canal Zone in 1954, the importance of Aden to British overseas interests was markedly increased. This was especially true following the decision to make the Colony the headquarters of British Middle East Command in 1960 and one of the three major military bases in the remnants of the Empire (along with the UK itself and Singapore). Whilst the Empire was no longer as extensive as it had been, to the majority of British policymakers, both Conservative and Labour, the UK was still a significant power overseas, a position which the politicians wanted to maintain. The decision to withdraw from Aden in 1966, therefore, was significant as it marked the beginnings of the final withdrawal from the Empire, a

process which had started in 1947 with the grant of independence to India and Pakistan and the relinquishment of the Palestine mandate. Unfortunately, too many historians have marked the Suez crisis of 1956 as the 'end of Empire', at least as far as the Middle East was concerned, a view which was not shared by either policymakers or the populations of South Arabia, the Persian Gulf, Libya or even Cyprus who were still under British control.

To redress this imbalance, this thesis aims to analyse the final years of British rule in Aden and the Protectorate, from the British perspective, with a view to placing this history in the wider perspective of the end of the British Empire and the 'east of Suez' policy of the 1950s and 1960s. The thesis argues that the base in Aden was the cornerstone of British defence and overseas policy in the Middle East, and as such more should have been done to improve the economic and social conditions in the Colony and Protectorate to consolidate the British position. This is therefore an analysis of later British imperial and colonial history, primarily using documents from the Public Record Office. The amount of British Government material available to the author was considerably more than any previous historian of the period and issues in question. However, these documents were not accepted uncritically and the papers used were cross-referenced with other primary and secondary texts and oral sources. The documents have also been contextualised in the period, placing them in the wider picture of the 'east of Suez' policy.

This is not, however, an attempt at deconstructing British Government documents from the period, as this was not in the scope of the thesis. Moreover, whilst the author has tried to provide background information and details on the Arab Nationalist groups in South West Arabia, this thesis is not an analysis of the politics, organisation or tactics of the various Nationalist groups in either North or South Yemen during this period. Information on these groups was limited, partly due to the language limitations of the author, partly due to the lack of oral sources willing or able to discuss the events covered in this thesis. A combination of British Intelligence documents and secondary sources did, however, provide sufficient material to fulfil the need for a certain amount of coverage of the struggle between the Nationalist factions and between the

Nationalists and the British. No analysis of the final years of British rule in South Arabia could be complete without coverage of the Nationalist campaign, but the latter is not the central focus of this thesis. Furthermore, there is more detail in this thesis on the Nationalists from a British perspective than was again previously available to other historians. Thus, this thesis attempts to fill the gaps existing in other accounts of British imperial history in Aden in the period in question, but it is not an analysis of the Nationalist campaign.

The withdrawal from Aden has been covered by several books, but few have either placed it as the main focus of the text, or had the access to sources that this author has had. R.J. Gavin's 'Aden under British Rule, 1839-1967' is a comprehensive account of the entire period of British rule in South Arabia, which has the most detailed look at the period 1839 to 1945 of any texts dealing with South Yemen. However, as Gavin himself stated in his preface, the book was originally intended to cover this period solely, but the ending of British rule in 1967 "required that the story be carried forward to its logical conclusion", although without dealing with the "deep complexities of the last phase"[1]. Whilst this is not a fault with the book, it does leave some gaps in the post-1945 history of British rule in Aden which need to be filled. Probably the best written and comprehensive account of the final years of British rule is in Glen Balfour-Paul's 'The end of empire in the Middle East', but Aden is only one of three episodes in the book covering the relinquishment of British colonies. Moreover, whilst the book does place the Aden episode in the wider perspective of Middle East history at the time, there is little about British defence policy, an important aspect given the nature of Aden as a major military base.

There are other accounts of the end of empire in Aden and the Protectorate, but they generally fall into one of two categories. Firstly there are autobiographies by former colonial officials, and so subjective by their very nature. Secondly there are the texts where the history in question is one of several dealt with by the book, and so unable to give the case of Aden sufficient attention. The former group primarily consists of Tom Hickinbotham's 'Aden', Charles Johnson's 'The view from Steamer Point', Kennedy

[1] Gavin, R.J. - *Aden Under British Rule, 1839-1967* (C. Hurst & Co., London, 1975)

Trevaskis's 'Shades of Amber' and Humphrey Trevelyan's 'The Middle East in Revolution'. All of them are valuable sources of information and provide interesting points of view and anecdotes, but only 'Shades of Amber' covers the entire period in question (Trevaskis served in South Arabia from 1953 to 1964, and is very critical of British policy in the period after his service ended) whereas the others only deal with the author's period in Aden. Moreover, with the exception of Michael Crouch's 'An Element of Luck' published in 1993, the autobiographies were published in the 1960s without the benefit of more recent accounts to balance their accounts. Nevertheless, autobiographies are a valuable source of information, and provide an alternative perspective to the Government documents of the time. This is also true of the autobiographies of the British politicians of the time, such as Harold Macmillan, Harold Wilson, Denis Healey and Richard Crossman. These texts highlight the differences among policymakers at the time, and also the differences between the politicians and the colonial officials when the two sets of autobiographies are compared.

As regards the other group of texts, those dealing with Aden as part of a series of examples of the end of Empire, they are again of interest, but have gaps which this thesis aims to account for. Books such as J.B. Kelly's 'Arabia, the Gulf and the West', Brian Lapping's 'The End of Empire', and Phillip Darby's 'British Defence Policy East of Suez' are all valuable texts, but use British policy in Aden as part of a wider view at British colonial or defence history. The impact of British colonial, defence and foreign policy on Aden, however, is not looked at in as much detail, with the possible exception of Darby's in-depth examination of British defence policy after World War Two. Unfortunately the number of texts examining the issue of British rule in Aden from an Arab Nationalist perspective is limited. The only authors to tackle the issue are Helen Lackner in 'P.D.R. Yemen', Fred Halliday in 'Arabia without Sultans' and Joseph Kostiner in 'The Struggle for South Yemen'[2], again all of value to an examination of the history of South Arabia in the 1950s and 1960s. These three authors are the only ones to attempt a study of the NLF, its organisation and tactics, as well as other

[2] It should be pointed out that Kostiner is, at times, guilty of not questioning the NLF position and evidence. However, there is still much of value in 'The Struggle for South Yemen', especially when cross-referenced with other sources.

Nationalist groups, but their coverage of British policy is limited, largely because it fell outside the scope of their books.

The other sources used in this thesis are primarily British Government documents from the Public Record Office, and this author was among the first to examine the documents covering the end of British rule which were only released under the thirty-years rule in the mid-1990s. An examination of Foreign Office, Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence files from the late 1950s to mid-1960s has uncovered large amounts of information which has been incorporated into this thesis. These sources are new to any text dealing with the history of South Arabia in the 1960s, and so of significant value. Moreover, no book dealing with the period in question published to date has incorporated the amount of primary information about British policy in Aden that this thesis contains.

Through a thorough examination of all these sources and texts, this author has attempted to provide a detailed and original account of the final years of British rule in Aden and South Arabia. Many questions arose, in particular the crucial issues of how the final years of British rule were so chaotic, and how the most extreme group of Nationalists were able to take power in 1967. Obviously the two issues were linked, but there are also different reasons for the two events occurring. Therefore, the issues of the impact of British overseas policy on local politics, as well as how the NLF were able to break free of the dominant regional influence of Nasser's UAR have to be answered. The author of this thesis has attempted to resolve these issues and fill in the gaps of other accounts of the period in question, as well as give a synthesis of all the new information provided by the release of government documents concerned with the period.

The first three chapters of this study are intended to give the local, regional and international background to the focus period of 1959 to 1967. Chapter One is a summary of the first century of British rule in Aden and South Arabia, a period when the Colony was governed from the Empire of India and was of little significance to policymakers in both London and Bombay. Chapter Two gives a brief synopsis of

international relations in the Middle East after 1945, in particular the decline of British influence and the development of the Cold War with its effect on the Arab world. The aim of this chapter is to place colonial rule in South Arabia in an international context and to help explain policy decisions taken by the British in the 1950s and 1960s. The immediate post-war period is also the focus of Chapter Three which covers the period 1945 to 1959 when the Federation of the Arab Amirates of the South was created in the Aden Protectorate. The growth of the Federation and its merger with the Colony of Aden in 1963 is covered by Chapter Four, as well as an in-depth analysis of British defence policy at the time and the impact it had on South Arabia. Chapter Five deals with the years 1963 to early 1966, including the tensions between policy-makers in London and British officials based in Aden and the differences (or lack of them) between the Conservative and Labour Governments towards the remnants of the Empire. A history of the Nationalist groups active in South Arabia in the 1960s is the focus of Chapter Six, in particular the NLF, its development, structure, relations with Nasser's Egypt and internal divisions. Finally Chapter Seven details the last two years of British rule in Aden, from Defence Secretary Denis Healey's 1966 White Paper to the final withdrawal of British troops in November 1967 and the establishment of the People's Republic of South Yemen.

Chapter One: A History of British Rule in South Arabia, 1839-1945

Introduction

The capture of the port of Aden on 19 January, 1839 by a small British squadron under Commander S.B. Haines was the first Colony taken by Great Britain in the Middle East and the first during the reign of Queen Victoria. Aden had a natural harbour and lay on the lines of communication between Britain and India and the Far East and so would have made an ideal staging post for the numerous ships travelling from Europe to the Indian Ocean and beyond. However, the following century saw minimal development of either the port and town of Aden or the surrounding region, despite its geographical and strategic benefits. Instead 'Fortress Aden' was the dominant policy for Aden in the nineteenth century as British defence interests were the top priority. Policy-makers in both London and Bombay (which had immediate responsibility for South Arabia) regarded the new Colony as a defensive outpost for the Empire of India and also as a second barrier for the defence of the Suez Canal after 1869. Thus, the strategic importance of the Colony was paramount, but not so important as to merit any serious attention. This was to change after 1945 when other colonies were relinquished (or the British were forced to withdraw), but before that point Aden was of distinctly little interest to any of the British Government departments. The result was that by World War Two, the British presence had brought little benefit to South Arabia, other than to the mercantile community of the port of Aden who had a larger client base thanks to the garrison stationed there.

Punishment Station

Aden before the British

By the time Aden was captured by the British, South Arabia was of little significance beyond the immediate region and consisted of numerous small sultanates, sheikhdoms, amirates and nomadic tribes. Aden itself was little more than a fishing village of 1,289 inhabitants and belonged to the 'Abdali Sultan of Lahej[1]. However, the region had not always been in a poor state and had supported a much larger population and been of greater significance in earlier times. The incense empires such as Saba, Qataban, and the Hadhramaut had flourished in pre-Islamic Arabia. Their wealth and fame were primarily derived from incense, a valuable commodity to the religious communities in the ancient Middle East, but also, as Gavin points out, these empires must have had a large population to build their monuments, and so must have had a prosperous agricultural system to feed the population[2]. These empires declined before the arrival of Islam and the region was reduced to subsistence agriculture. There was another period of power and prosperity under the Rasulid dynasty which ruled over an independent Yemen from 1232 until the mid-fifteenth century[3].

Even during regional declines, however, Aden remained an important regional trading centre, in particular when the Red Sea route was the primary trading route to Asia (by the same token, when the Persian Gulf route was in ascendancy, Aden suffered). Under the Rasulids, Aden became the terminus for commerce with India, Ceylon, China and South-East Asia (this was also partly due to the Mongols conquering the Tigris-Euphrates region and disrupting the trading system there). Marco Polo visited Aden in 1276 and found a city of 80,000 with 360 mosques[4]. He also commented that the

---

[1] Gavin, R.J. - *Aden under British Rule 1839-1967* (C. Hurst & Co., London, 1975), p. 445 - other historians such as Helen Lackner (who used Gavin as her main source for this period) and Gordon Waterfield cite the figure at 600 inhabitants, but according to the Aden Records that Gavin used this was the figure for the Arab population only, there was also a Jewish community of a similar size, and smaller Somali and Indian groups

[2] Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 3-5

[3] *ibid.*, pp. 11-12

[4] Halliday, Fred - *Arabia without Sultans* (Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 154

wealth of the "Soldan of Aden" was based upon taxes and the trade with India, Aden "being the most considerable mart in all that quarter for the exchange of commodities, and the place to which all trading vessels resort"[5]. After the Rasulids, Aden continued to prosper for some decades under the Tahirid dynasty (from 1450) which was a less powerful and more localised regime. This meant that the Tahirids did not have to spread their disbursements as widely as their predecessors and so maintaining Aden's prosperity[6].

Aden also benefited from Portuguese trading in the Middle East as they controlled the Red Sea route, although increasingly Aden was only one commercial centre among many rivals in the Arabian Peninsula. This was the last period of prosperity until the British arrived, since Aden's position as the regional trading centre ended in 1535 when the town was taken by Ottoman forces who were driving the Portuguese out of the Red Sea. From then on Aden was part of the Ottoman province in the Yemen and its status was relegated to that of the province's southern fortress. The Ottoman-Portuguese war certainly helped the decline of Aden, but in economic terms the real decline was due to the rise in coffee trading. The Ottomans chose Mokha as their main port in the Yemen because it was closer to the main coffee-growing areas and Aden suffered as a result. The decline in the coffee trade in the early eighteenth century saw the relaxation of Ottoman control over the Yemen and the 'Abdali Sultan of Lahej with support from the tribes of Yafi' took control over Aden in 1730. This did not result in a return to prosperity as the areas controlled by the 'Abdali and the Yafi' were poor and the port continued its decline until European interest in the Middle East was revived during the Napoleonic Wars[7].

The Capture of Aden

The occupation of Egypt by the French in 1798 was a clear threat to British interests and the authorities in both London and India realised steps had to be taken to secure the

[5] Holden, David - *Farewell to Arabia* (Walker and Company, New York, 1966), p. 18
[6] Gavin - *op.cit.*, p. 12
[7] *ibid.*, pp. 19-20

route to India and the East. Ships were sent to the Red Sea to command the Bab el Mandeb, but the chosen site of Perim (a small island in the mouth of the Red Sea) was barren and had no water, so the force tried to use Mokha as their base. However, anti-British feelings there meant a relocation to Aden where the Sultan was either willing to accept or unable to oppose the stationing of British troops in September 1799[8]. The troops returned to India in 1800, and British forces drove out the French from Egypt in 1801, but the incident forced British authorities to re-examine the Western approaches to India. Other factors were the growth in 'piracy' by ships based in the Persian Gulf which was seriously affecting British trade between India and Europe and there was also a renewed trade in coffee with Mokha involving British ships. In order to reassert their dominance in the region and protect the increasing trade with the Peninsula, British ships began charting the waters in the Red Sea in the early nineteenth century. However, at this stage there was no attempt to establish a colony in the region, only to protect British trade and shipping.

The situation changed again in the 1830s with Muhammed Ali's Egyptian forces appearing to undermine the Ottoman Empire, including the Empire's provinces in the Arabian Peninsula. This increased the threat to British trade in the Middle East as it meant there was a danger of increased regional instability. Opinion in London was split over Muhammed Ali as he replaced some ineffectual regimes in the Peninsula which benefited British commercial concerns, as did his establishment of coaling depots once interest grew in the use of steamships[9]. However, British foreign policy strategy in the Middle East at the time centred on bolstering the Ottoman Empire against Russia (which threatened British interests in India) and the actions of Muhammed Ali were putting this strategy in danger. Moreover, there was the simple fact that Egyptian presence in the Red Sea was a threat to British commercial dominance in the area and the establishment of another power in South Arabia was in itself a potential threat to India. For these reasons, increasingly forceful warnings were sent to Muhammed Ali in the 1830s to leave Aden alone and not pass the Bab el Mandeb, the southern entrance to the Red Sea.

---

[8] *ibid.*, p. 22
[9] *ibid.*, p. 26

However, by 1838 these warnings had changed in content so that the British were claiming Aden for themselves and no longer warning others off[10]. The decision to take Aden was much debated in both London and India by the British authorities, and at first they negotiated with Sultan Muhsin Fadl al 'Abdali, the ruler of Aden and Lahej. The reasons for wanting Aden were not solely to warn off Muhammed Ali, in fact probably more important was the desire for a coaling depot on the sea route to India as steamships were taking over from sail at the time. Many in the Government argued that, if it was only as a coaling station that the British wanted Aden, then this could be obtained without the expense of a military occupation. However, the man in charge of the negotiations with Sultan Muhsin, Commander Stafford Bettesworth Haines of the Indian Navy, wanted to take Aden and believed it could be converted into a major international port again. Haines had been involved in the charting of the Red Sea and, according to Gavin, there were accusations that he helped scupper the negotiations to lease the island of Socotra as an alternative to Aden because he believed the latter had better prospects[11]. Occupation was supported by the Governor of Bombay, Sir Robert Grant, and there were strategic arguments from London supporting this option[12]. Lord Palmerston, the British Foreign Secretary, also supported the case for occupation as he wanted to warn off Muhammed Ali and protect the route to India[13]. However, there was also strong opposition, including from the East India Company which had control of British interests in Aden at the time and wanted to reach agreement with the local ruler rather than occupy the port. This was presumably out of fear that military action would jeopardise the Company's commercial interests in the region.

Ultimately, the decision was taken out of the hands of both London and Bombay by the actions of Haines who was sent back to Aden in September 1838 to negotiate again with the Sultan. Negotiation failed once more, partly over terms, partly over mistrust between Haines and Sultan Muhsin, and for two months there was minor conflict

---

[10] *ibid.*, p. 27
[11] *ibid.*, p. 28
[12] *ibid.*, pp. 33-4
[13] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 153, Halliday compares Palmerston's hatred for Muhammad Ali with Eden's hatred for Nasser in the 1950s

between the British ship and the 'Abdalis. Finally, Grant's successor as Governor of Bombay ignored the Governor-General of India and sent more troops to Haines with the intention of taking Aden forcibly[14]. The result was that after a brief naval bombardment, British troops landed in Aden and hoisted the Union Jack, with the loss of only sixteen killed and wounded. The seizure of Aden had been forced upon London and India by Haines' actions and the decision of Bombay to support him, and the British government had to accept the fait accompli. Ironically, within two years of the occupation, Muhammed Ali had been forced out of the Arabian Peninsula and the other Ottoman territories he had conquered by British actions in the Mediterranean, and one of the reasons for taking Aden had been rendered obsolete.

Haines' Aden

Whilst the British Government in both London and India had to accept the reality of events, there was no attempt to turn Aden into the major commercial centre that Haines believed it could be. The fact that Haines, only a Naval Commander, remained in charge of Aden as Political Resident for fifteen years reflected the fact that the port was not viewed as important by his superiors. Had the port been viewed as anything more than a coaling station by the authorities in London and the Government of India in Bombay which had jurisdiction over the new colony, then a higher-ranked and better connected official would have been in charge[15]. According to Gavin the question of Aden's status among the decision-makers was a controversial one. Therefore, Haines was in reality a compromise candidate between those who wanted to develop Aden and those who wanted to keep it as a coaling depot and nothing else[16].

Haines, therefore, got no support in his ambitious plans, especially as he managed to alienate most of the British military commanders during his period in charge[17]. The Political Resident was able to outwit most of his opponents within the British military,

---

[14] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 36
[15] Lackner, Helen - *P.D.R. Yemen* (Ithaca Press, London, 1985), p. 8
[16] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 39
[17] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 8; Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 39-43

but he inspired little respect in his methods for doing so and it is unlikely he would have lasted so long if Aden had not been of such little importance to his superiors in Bombay. One advantage that Haines did have, however, was his ability to play "the tribal rivalry games according to much the same rules as the Yemeni leaders"[18]. He was also able to claim with some truth that "he alone understood the politics of Aden and the hinterland and that his methods were successful"[19]. Despite this, Aden was subjected to attacks from the neighbouring 'Abdali tribe which organised a coalition against the British. Three frontal assaults between 1839 and 1840 failed to dislodge the British from Aden, however, as did an attempted blockade of the port during the 1840s, although supplies did run short at times and the garrison suffered from scurvy[20].

Whilst Haines did understand local politics better than any other British official, his personal relations with Sultan Muhsin were poor. There was deep mistrust between the two, especially as the Sultan believed that Haines was supporting his sons and internal enemies in Lahej against his rule. This mistrust was one of the main causes for the assaults on Aden and the blockade that followed the British conquest. Haines was able to make peace with the other neighbouring tribes, the 'Aqrabis and the Fadhlis, but never with Sultan Muhsin. It was not until the latter's death in 1847 that relations between Aden and Lahej improved[21]. Haines was also capable of misreading the situation, allying the British in Aden with the Imam of Sana against Sharif Hussain of Abu 'Arish in the Tihama (the coastal strip of Yemen on the Red Sea). This move backfired in 1844 when the Imam then allied himself with the Sharif against the British, although their alliance did not last long enough to attack Aden[22].

Ultimately, Haines was recalled to Bombay in 1854 and jailed for financial malpractices[23]. During his period in charge, Haines had dominated the colony, but failed to develop it into the major trading centre he had aimed for. His constant conflict with other British officials and poor relations with certain hinterland rulers (in

---

[18] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 8
[19] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 43
[20] *ibid.*, pp. 66-70
[21] *ibid.*, pp. 77-8
[22] *ibid.*, pp. 72-4
[23] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 9

particular Sultan Muhsin) had meant little was achieved in terms of administrative, economic, or social progress in Aden. After his departure, attempts were made to bring Aden and its administration into line with other British dependencies.

The Suez Canal and Economic Growth

The appointment of Haines' successor was significant because Colonel James Outram had important political connections, the lack of which had limited Haines' attempts to establish Aden as a major trading centre. Outram had such influence in the East India Company that the Governor of Bombay had to be careful how he treated the new Political Resident[24]. This not only showed a change of attitude by the Government of India, but also tied Aden more closely into the East India Company. Another significant factor was making Aden a free port in 1853, charging no duties for the import and export of goods, which attracted the larger merchant ships visiting the Red Sea[25]. From 1854 onwards, therefore, there was a period of growth in the Aden economy as Outram used his contacts and also recruited staff who had their own connections to higher places, such as R. L. Playfair who 'had the ear of' John Murray, Ambassador to Persia and later Permanent Under-Secretary of State at the Foreign Office[26]. However, this growth only affected Aden's trade with India and beyond, there was no attempt to improve links with the hinterland and make the colony into the regional trading centre that Haines had envisaged.

Moreover, Aden's role as a trading centre was not intentional Government of India policy as it had decreed in 1854 that "the military importance of Aden is to be considered paramount to its commercial improvement, and should be the first object in view"[27]. This view of Aden as a military station first and commercial centre second was predominant among the policy-makers in the Government of India until control of South Arabia passed to the Colonial Office in 1937. Whilst trade did increase from

---

[24] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 91
[25] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 156
[26] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 92
[27] Waterfield, Gordon - *Sultans of Aden* (John Murray, London, 1968), p. 4

between 5 and 8 million rupees in the early 1850s to between 22 and 33 million rupees by the early 1870s this was not due to measures enacted by either Bombay or London, more through the activities of the Aden authorities[28]. Similarly, the occupation of Perim island in 1856 and purchase of Little Aden peninsula in 1869 were done to forestall French expansion into the Red Sea rather than to improve and develop the colony. The strategic importance of Aden was the unquestioned reason for the British presence. The 'Fortress Aden' policy dominated British thinking towards the port, with the Colony being used as a punishment station due to its poor conditions of service. The Abyssinian expedition in 1867-68 when British troops were sent from Aden into Abyssinia to secure the release of the British consul there underlined the view of the Colony as a military base and staging post for ships.

Whilst the military and strategic value of Aden was the *raison d'être* for British policy there, the shipping trade and coal bunkering industry were also important. The location of the Colony on the world's major shipping lanes and its natural harbour meant there was an ever-increasing number of ships stopping at Aden. The opening of the Suez Canal in 1869 further increased the value of the port and Colony in both strategic and commercial terms, although again the primary use of Aden was envisaged in military terms. This policy of 'Fortress Aden' meant the town's defences were built up and Aden came to be seen as the first line of defence for British interests in the Suez Canal. The boost to the local economy from the opening of the Canal meant that Aden replaced Berbera (on the Somali coast) as the major regional trading centre (which had been Haines' ambition). However, it was still viewed by British policy-makers as a military post and its primary role was to seal the Red Sea should the Suez Canal fall into enemy hands. Even then its value was of "very doubtful importance" according to Lord Northcote in 1903[29] and was only the second line of defence for the British position in the Middle East (the first being naval command in the Mediterranean). Moreover, the increase in commerce meant that Aden became increasingly difficult to defend as the town spread, despite substantial improvements in the seaward defences.

---

[28] Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 102-3, Gavin got these figures from Playfair's *History of Arabia Felix*
[29] *ibid.*, p. 176

The economy of Aden did continue to grow as merchants settled it as a major trading centre (for cotton goods, coal, grain, coffee, and hides and skins). The port's ability to emerge from a commercial war with the Perim Company (based on the island of Perim in the mouth of the Red Sea) over coal bunkering in the 1890s showed the strength of its commerce. However, this was largely due to the colony's strategic location and natural harbours. This was especially true after the inner harbour was dredged in 1895 to allow the larger and faster steamships to take on coal there rather than the rougher outer harbour[30]. Nevertheless, the 'Fortress Aden' concept was the dominant view in both London and Bombay and took priority over any commercial value. Therefore, the growth in the economy can be viewed as almost accidental since the primary role of Aden was strategic and military rather than commercial, as can be seen with British attitudes towards the hinterland.

Move into the Hinterland

Ottoman Rule in the Yemen

Whilst the defences of Aden were being strengthened and its economy benefited from the opening of the Suez Canal and the military presence, little was done to improve British awareness of the surrounding hinterland, let alone develop relations. Under Bombay orders, the British authorities in Aden were prohibited from expanding their influence into the Sultanates, Amirates and Sheikhdoms of South Arabia. Events did force a re-think of this policy by the end of the nineteenth century since the British position in Aden was being threatened by Ottoman expansion in Yemen and the claim of the Sublime Porte in Constantinople to suzerainty over the region.

The Ottomans had controlled the Yemen from the early sixteenth through to the early eighteenth centuries, but then the Empire had begun to decline and lose its grip over

[30] *ibid.*, p. 184

certain territories. However, when the Imam of Sana (Haines' erstwhile ally, see above) faced deadlock with Sharif Hussain of the Tihama in the 1840s, he invited the Ottomans back to Yemen in order to bolster his regime. The Ottoman troops seized the Tihama (the Sharif's territory) in 1848, and an agreement was reached with the Imam whereby he would acknowledge Ottoman sovereignty and could rule his own territory with a garrison of Ottoman troops[31]. However, the presence of these troops caused riots in Sana, the garrison was forced to withdraw back to the coast, the Imam was assassinated and there followed twenty years of chaos and disorder with a powerless Imamate. The opening of the Suez Canal allowed easier access for Constantinople to send reinforcements to the Yemen and under Ahmed Mukhtar Pasha reoccupy Sana and the northern highlands (1872)[32].

Initially, the Ottoman presence in South Arabia was of no great concern to the British in Aden. In fact the twenty years of unrest that followed the riots of 1849 caused an economic depression in the Yemen, which was a boost to the Aden economy as there was stability, unlike further north in the port of Mokha. However, the growth of the pan-Islam movement within the Empire itself and the weakening hold on the Balkan territories saw the Ottomans attempt to extend their control and move south to impose their suzerainty over the whole of South Arabia. Arabia was still a powerful political and religious symbol within the Islamic world, and was a potential focus for Islamic unity under the Ottoman Sultan. Therefore, the presence of Britain in the corner of the peninsula where the Prophet had sent his son-in-law Ali to preach the word of Islam was not welcome to many Muslims. The result was a drive to control the whole of South Arabia once Ottoman troops had recovered most of the Yemen in 1872, and pressure was put upon the rulers of the hinterland around Aden to acknowledge Ottoman sovereignty.

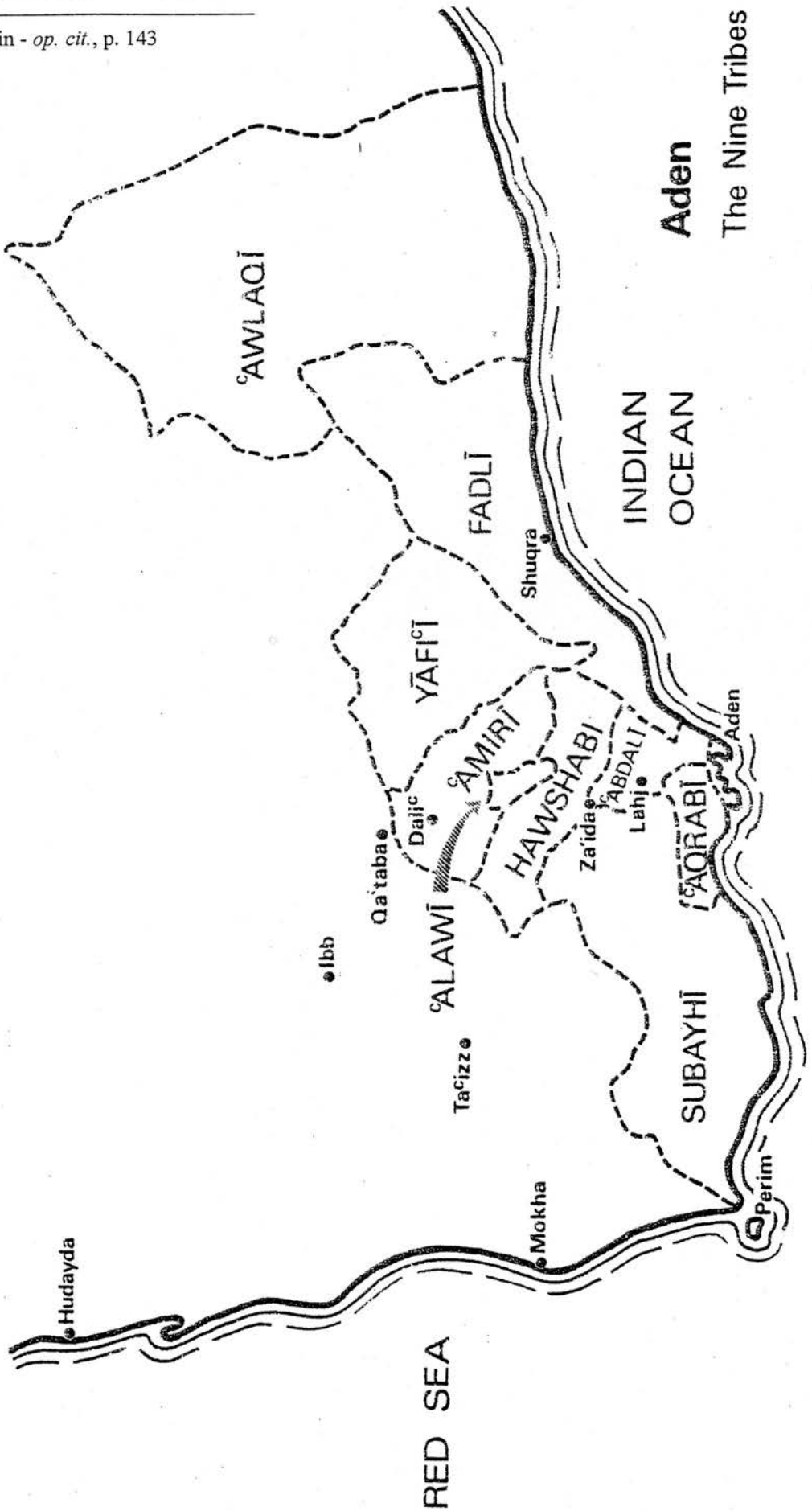
The threat to neighbouring rulers was noted in Aden, but due to the reluctance of Bombay to expand British territory or influence, little could be done. The minimal

---

[31] Bidwell, Robin - *The Two Yemens* (Longman Westview Press, Harlow, 1983), pp. 44-45
[32] *ibid.*, p. 45; Dresch, Paul - *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1989), p. 217

Map 3: The 'nine tribes' listed in 1873[33]

[33] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 143



importance of South Arabia meant that unless Aden itself was threatened, then there were to be no attempts to extend British influence beyond the Colony. The formation of a cavalry troop in 1868 at least enabled the authorities in Aden to attempt to map the hinterland and expand their horizons beyond the bordering 'Abdali, Fadhli and 'Arabia tribes. However, there was limited contact with the surrounding area and it was only the threat of Ottoman expansion that forced the British into action. The first conflict of interest had occurred in 1867 when Ottoman ships had sailed to the Hadhramaut to support one side in a dispute, a move which greatly annoyed the British as they had political relations with the other side[34]. However, negotiations in Constantinople saw the withdrawal of the ships and an agreement to abstain from interference in the Hadhramaut, but it was clear that an active policy in South Arabia was being pursued by the Ottomans.

This policy was again shown in the early 1870s when pressure was brought to bear on the southern Yemeni tribes by the Ottomans. Some of the rulers of these tribes recognised Ottoman sovereignty (the Subaihi according to Lackner, and the Haushabi according to Bidwell, quite probably both) and the 'Abdali Sultan of Lahej was commanded to acknowledge the claim of the Sultan-Caliph to suzerainty over South Arabia. This meant that the Ottomans were on the borders of Aden, and the Government of India was forced to take action to extend influence into the hinterland to secure the British position. Therefore, a list of nine tribes was drawn up by the British, whose independence the Ottoman Empire should respect. The list consisted of the tribes inhabiting the area surrounding Aden: the 'Abdali, Fadhli, 'Aulaqi, Yafi'i, Haushabi, 'Amiri, 'Alawi, 'Arabia, and Subaihi (see Map 2, p. 18)[35]. This was only a political delineation rather than a British claim to territory. Moreover, whilst these tribes would later make up most of the territory which became the Western Aden Protectorate it was not an attempt to create a Protectorate as the Government of India were still loath to extend British influence beyond Aden.

---

[34] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p 10; Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 164-5
[35] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 140-1

The May 1873 notification to Constantinople was not enough, however, as Ottoman troops were sent towards Lahej and enlisted rivals of the Sultan as their allies. To counter this the Indian Government acceded to the Political Resident's (Schneider) request to send British troops to protect the 'Abdali Sultan. There was no fighting between the two forces, but a conflict between the two Empires over South Arabia was a distinct possibility. Indeed, the Duke of Argyll (Secretary of State for India) threatened to use the Indian Army to oust the Ottomans, a prospect which greatly alarmed the Foreign Office who still regarded the Sublime Porte as a friendly government. However, a threat of force sent to Constantinople forced the Ottoman Empire to reconsider their actions since a war with Britain would add considerable expense to an already costly venture in South Arabia. Moreover, defeat would have had wider repercussions for Ottoman rule in the Yemen by shattering their air of invincibility, and so the expansionist party in both Constantinople and London was overruled, and Ottoman troops withdrew from Lahej and Haushabi country in December 1873[36]. This withdrawal allowed Britain to consolidate the rule of the Sultan of Lahej, and the series of incidents with the Ottoman Empire in this period did mean that a re-think of policy was necessary in order to strengthen the British position in South Arabia.

The Protectorate Treaties and Demarcation of the Frontier

The Ottoman claim to sovereignty over the whole of South Arabia was not ended when their troops withdrew from Lahej in 1873. The British, therefore, decided to consolidate their interests in the region and in the late 1880s signed a series of protectorate treaties with various tribes in South West Arabia. This was also partly out of a change of policy in the British Government from a mercantile concern to a more colonialist and expansionist attitude, as shown by the Congress of Berlin in 1885 and the 'scramble for Africa' among the European powers in the late nineteenth century. This rush for territory after the British intervention in Egypt in 1882 prompted fears among policy-makers in London and India that other European powers (in particular

[36] *ibid.*, pp. 144-5

France and Germany) would encroach on British interests in the Red Sea and East Africa. This in turn saw the Government of India seek to secure the coast of South Arabia through treaties with the local rulers, starting with the Sultan of Qishn and Socotra in 1886[37]. However, there was no immediate attempt to secure protectorate treaties with the 'nine tribes' listed in 1873, mainly because the occupation of Egypt had offended the Sublime Porte, and Britain did not want to threaten or further offend the Ottoman Empire unduly in South Arabia.

Events in the hinterland, however, forced a change in this policy and protectorate treaties were signed with inland tribes and rulers. The traditional society in South Arabia was disrupted by the introduction of a new commodity, the trade in arms which saw the arrival of the Le Gras, Remington, and Martini-Henry rifles to the region[38]. The arrival of these new weapons from the 1880s onwards enabled the landless class to assert their independence from the local ruler, and weakened local powerful families. Moreover, the range and accuracy of the new rifles increased the ability to kill and maim, which in turn increased the number of blood feuds and vendettas among families and tribes, so further dividing society. One result of this was that the local rulers had to increase their rates for protecting goods in transit as landless tribesmen attacked caravans crossing the hinterland. Another was that many of the smaller chiefdoms, feeling pressure from the Ottomans to the north, and from Lahej in the south, were being squeezed and losing control of their territory. Many turned to the British for protection and support for their rule. Some others might have also turned to the Ottomans, but the latter was supporting many opponents of the local shaikh or amir and so often seen as helping to undermine existing society. Moreover, in the early 1890s, the Ottomans were having to deal with renewed rebellion in the Yemen from a revived Imamate which was overrunning many of their positions in the north.

For these reasons, the weaker rulers in the hinterland began asking the British for protection. The first of the 'nine tribes' to sign a Protectorate Treaty were the 'Alawi

---

[37] *ibid.*, p. 200
[38] *ibid.*, pp. 203-4

Shaikh and Lower Yafi'i Sultan in July 1895 and the Haushabi Sultan in August[39]. All three rulers had been under pressure to accept Ottoman sovereignty, but instead turned to the British for protection and financial aid. The recent deterioration in Anglo-Ottoman relations justified these advances into the hinterland from the British point of view, but the treaties did not halt the changes taking place in South Arabia. Moreover, the tribal disputes were drawing the two international powers into confrontations, although there was only one instance of armed conflict before World War One, at al Darayjah in 1901. The incident had roots in the rivalry between the Sultan of Lahej and the Shaikh of Mawiya in the Yemen, the latter building a fort on the main trade route between Lahej and the Yemeni highlands at al Darayjah on the Haushabi border. Initially the Shaikh had to withdraw under British pressure when the Ottomans denied all knowledge of the fort, but then Ottoman favour was regained and the fort was re-occupied. Whereas previously British policy would have involved attempts to resolve the dispute through diplomacy in Constantinople, circumstances and personnel had changed within British circles. The military at Aden were against pandering to the Ottoman authorities once more, whilst the Viceroy of India, Lord Curzon, favoured a more aggressive policy, and had little respect for the Ottomans. Furthermore, the Foreign Office were no longer so sensitive to Ottoman susceptibilities as British priorities were changing in international affairs away from the Middle East towards Central and Eastern Asia. Therefore, the news of the reoccupation of al Darayjah was not well received and in July 1901 a force of British troops from Aden moved against the fort. After a brief cannonade, the Shaikh's forces fled, leaving the Ottomans out-gunned, who then also withdrew leaving the British troops to raze the fort[40].

The al Darayjah incident had important repercussions as it showed the British were in earnest about protecting Aden and its immediate hinterland and unwilling to permit the Ottomans to surround the Colony. After a period of tension, agreement was reached between the Sublime Porte and the British to set up a boundary commission to draw a line between the two spheres of influence. However, it proved very difficult to agree on the actual border. To respond to the threat from Ottoman troops north of the Dali'

[39] *ibid.*, p. 210
[40] *ibid.*, p. 217

frontier, the 'Aden movable column' was formed and sent north. Furthermore, two British cruisers were sent to Aden, and the Sublime Porte was warned that Britain would not allow Ottoman reinforcements to land to aid the troops dealing with the Imam's rebellion in northern Yemen[41]. The result of these measures was to not only force the Sultan to back down and withdraw his troops from the Dali' area, but also to swing the balance in the hinterland in favour of the British. Those local rulers that had been either delaying their decision or even actually hostile to the British responded to invitations from Aden to negotiate. The result was that, despite London's reluctance, in the year from May 1903 a series of protectorate agreements was reached with most of the rulers within the limits of British claims in South Arabia (the 'Amiri, Upper Yafi'i, Upper 'Aulaqi and Beihan districts[42]). These treaties did not endow the British with any real authority in the hinterland, but they were meaningful as they formally extended British influence beyond Aden. As regards the boundary commission, differences continued, but the work was concluded after the Ottoman Commissioner signed a proces-verbal in April 1905 settling most of the outstanding differences. In fact, relations between the British in Aden and the Ottomans in the north substantially improved over the next decade, the authorities in Aden even allowing the passage of Ottoman mail through Lahej during the Italian blockade of the Yemen (1911)[43].

The Protectorate Treaties signed with the hinterland rulers were basically forced upon London by the Government of India and Aden, but the British Government would not accept any further incursions. The Aden authorities planned to extend trade with the hinterland and even proposed a railway scheme into the area. However, London vetoed these plans and in October 1906 ordered the withdrawal of British troops from the hinterland, forcing Aden back into the policy of inactivity that had been the norm before the al Darayjah incident[44]. The more active policy pursued by Aden had been strongly supported by Lord Curzon in India, but the change of government in London in 1906 had brought the Liberals to power, who were opposed to expansionist policies, in particular Lord Morley, the new Secretary of State for India. Therefore, British policy

---

[41] *ibid.*, pp. 223-4
[42] *ibid.*, p. 225
[43] Bidwell - *op. cit.*, p. 52
[44] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 235

in South Arabia returned to non-intervention in the hinterland and consolidation of the defensive position in Aden.

World War One

During the years up to World War One the Ottomans were too busy dealing with the Imam in Yemen to intervene in Aden's hinterland. In fact, the Imam was more of a threat to British influence as his forces drove the Ottomans out of much of the Yemeni highlands and were on the borders of British-protected territories at times. However, conflict with the Imam would not occur until after the Ottoman surrender in the Middle East in October 1918. The only potential threats from the Imam were the letters sent in 1912 to the Qutaybi and 'Alawi shaikhs, the Haushabi and Lower Yafi'i Sultans and the Upper Yafi'i chiefs, but these were seeking only a general acceptance of the Imam's authority. This was nothing more than he had received from the 1911 agreement with the Ottomans, acceptance of his religious suzerainty and payment of the Islamic tithe[45]. As regards Aden itself, the port's business continued to grow and the garrison was expanded, but it was still not a primary concern of the British compared to the more important colonies of India and the Middle East.

Once the First World War broke out, little in fact changed in South Arabia. The main concern of both Britain and the Ottoman Empire was further north in Egypt or the Persian Gulf, and that was where the majority of fighting between the two powers took place. Reinforcements were sent to Aden to counter the already large Ottoman army in the Yemen, but the main British weapons in the Protectorate continued to be money, arms and a promise of independence from Ottoman rule. The British made attempts to bring the Imam under their influence through the Sultan of Lahej and the Sharif of Mecca as a rebellion behind Ottoman lines could have caused them severe difficulties. However, the Imam was afraid the British wanted to extend their influence beyond Aden and the Protectorate, and his rule had been recognised in northern and eastern Yemen by the Ottomans so British attempts failed. Therefore, the British turned to

[45] *ibid.*, p. 242

Sayyid 'Idris in the Tihama to undermine the Ottoman cause, signing an alliance in April 1915[46]. This alliance tied the two sides together politically and militarily, a fact which would have consequences in Anglo-Imamate relations after World War One. The arms and money 'Idris received were used to tie down Ottoman troops that might otherwise have been turned against the British elsewhere in the Middle East. However, 'Idris was a rival of the Imam to control of the tribes in the Yemen, and the latter would hold this against the British after 1918.

In Aden itself, the British took up a largely defensive stance and made no attempt to shore up the Protectorate against an Ottoman attack. Therefore, when Ottoman troops crossed the border at the end of June 1915 and moved on Lahej the authorities in Aden were in no real position to respond. The 'Aden Movable Column' was quickly formed from the Aden garrison and sent to Lahej where the 'Abdali forces had been easily defeated. However, the forced march north in hot conditions took its toll on the troops, the Subaihi camel drivers deserted with most of the stores, the advance force sent in requisitioned cars got stuck in the sand, and only 250 men and a ten-pounder battery actually reached Lahej[47]. There were some skirmishes with the Ottoman troops, but the focus had by then changed from defending Lahej to enabling an orderly withdrawal, but even that was not achieved as large amounts of equipment were left behind. The Ottomans continued their advance whilst the British drew up defensive lines at Khormaksar and prepared for a final stand. However, Aden command's fears were exaggerated as the Ottoman troops stopped at Shaikh 'Uthman on the outskirts of Aden proper. Given the fiasco at Lahej, it was not surprising that the Resident was dismissed, his command transferring to General Younghusband who drove the Ottomans five miles clear of Aden, but no further. Allegedly the General was only concerned that Aden golf course was out of range of the Ottoman artillery and had no interest in occupying Lahej as it would then have to be garrisoned. The rest of the war was spent in stalemate, neither side having the resources to waste on a full-scale confrontation in South Arabia.

---

[46] *ibid.*, p. 245
[47] *ibid.*, p. 248

From Fortress Aden to Forward Policy

The Imam of Yemen and the Treaty of Sana

World War One left Britain in control of much of the Middle East and the Empire was expanded to include mandates in Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq. However, there was no expansion in South Arabia and British and Ottoman troops were still in the same position as they had been since 1915. Under the armistice, the Ottomans had to withdraw from the Yemen, and their position was quickly filled by the Imam who aimed to unify the country under his rule. This left the British and the Imam as the two regional powers in South Arabia. Neither side trusted the other, and there was to be almost constant conflict until the Imamate was overthrown in 1962. The British in Aden felt that the Imam had not done enough against the Ottomans and had ambitions to control the Protectorate, whilst the Imam resented the British preference for 'Idris in the Tihama. The departing Ottoman troops in the Protectorate were replaced by those of the Imam in Dhala, Upper Yafi'i and Haushabi, whilst to speed up the Ottoman withdrawal the British occupied Hodeidah on the Red Sea coast in December 1918[48].

British policy regarding the importance of the hinterland at the time was as limited as it had been ever since Aden was first taken. The debate over whether to abandon the Protectorate, negotiate with the Imam or consolidate the British position outside Aden continued through the 1920s, but for the most part the Imam's actions forced the British to act. At first non-intervention continued to dominate under the Government of India. The policy was to keep the local rulers divided and split so as not to challenge the British position:

> "What we want is not a united Arabia but a weak and disunited Arabia split into little principalities as far as possible under our suzerainty - but incapable of co-ordinated action against us, forming a buffer against the powers in the West"[49].

[48] Bidwell - *op. cit.*, p. 66-7
[49] *ibid.*, p. 67

This meant no more territory was to be annexed, but to reconcile the Imam and 'Idris and count them among British satellites. However, there were several problems with this policy, not least that the Imam and 'Idris were irreconcilable, and that the Imam desired control over all historical 'al-Yemen', including the Protectorate. British and Imamic policies in South Arabia were therefore also irreconcilable and the latter's actions meant that non-intervention was not really a possibility unless the Protectorate Treaties were to be renounced.

Another factor was that the Imam's claim to sovereignty over all of the Yemen was not universally welcomed by its inhabitants. The Imam was a Zeidi Shi'ite Muslim whereas the majority of the population of the Protectorate, and also of the Tihama, were Shafi'i Sunni and did not want a Zeidi overlord any more than many of them had wanted an Ottoman overlord. The Imam, in fact, used tribes mainly from the Zeidi north of Islam in his conquest of the Yemen, and treated the expansion as a jihad:

> "The tribesman who enrolled under the Imam's standard and came from north of San'a to the lowlands of the Tihamah, to Ibb, to Ta'izz, and al-Bayda' was not referred to as a soldier but as a warrior in the cause of the God"[50].

The 'Idris on the other hand was a Shafi'i, which was another reason for the irreconcilable differences, although the fact that both had designs on dominating the Yemen was probably more telling. The 'Idris died in 1923 and his 16-year old son was driven out of Hodeidah (which had been vacated by the British in 1920 and left to the 'Idris) in 1925, leaving the Imam with no major rival in the Yemen[51]. However, the Imam's control over the tribes was not complete, and during the 1920s he acted as more of an arbitrator than a ruler, but in the early 1930s he imposed his full authority on them, keeping up to 4,000 hostages to ensure his control[52].

---

[50] Nu'man, al-Atraf, - *al-ma'niyyah fi l'yaman*, 1965, p.27, taken from Dresch - *op. cit.*, p. 224
[51] Bidwell, - *op. cit.*, p. 70
[52] Dresch - *op. cit.*, p. 229; also Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 93, when Imam Ahmad went to Rome for medical treatment in 1959 he even took some of his hostages with him to guarantee their tribes' good behaviour in Yemen

The Imam, however, was largely isolated from the outside world, and knew little about international politics and the real power of the British. Since he had assumed the Imamate in 1904, Imam Yahya had seen the British only in South Arabian terms. Limited to Aden, the British had been defeated by the Ottomans at Lahej, and the Imam had successfully taken much territory that they allegedly protected after World War One. For these reasons, Yahya did not see the British as formidable opponents. This would mean that it would take a lot for the authorities in Aden to convince the Imam that they would not accept his claim to the Protectorate, and that his troops should withdraw from Amiri, Qutaybi, 'Alawi, Shaibi, Audhali, Upper Yafi'i, and Subaihi lands, some of which were within 40 miles of Aden[53]. Negotiation was attempted and in 1926 Sir Gilbert Clayton (who had successfully negotiated with Ibn Saud and King Feisal) went to San'a to discuss the Protectorate with the Imam[54]. The Imam was willing to allow Britain to retain Aden, promised not to send troops into other parts of the Protectorate, and agreed to maintain the status quo in those territories where Aden's interests needed to be safeguarded (in particular Lahej), but he would not withdraw his troop from those areas already occupied. This underlines that the Imam felt he was negotiating with an equal, certainly not making concessions to a superior power, and the breakdown of the talks left Yahya maintaining his claim to the Protectorate. Clearly the British could not remove the Imam's troops from southern Yemen without force, and unfortunately for Yahya, due to his isolation, he did not know much about the RAF and air proscription.

The refusal of the Imam to withdraw from nominally British-protected territories meant that the Government of India had to countenance force to keep their promises to the Protectorate rulers. However, this was at a time when the Middle East was a low priority for Britain given its concerns with Europe, which saw the region starved of defence resources in the inter-war period[55]. The estimated cost of forcing the Imam's troops out of the Protectorate was £1 million which was a considerable expenditure for

---

[53] Bidwell - *op. cit.*, p. 70
[54] Ingrams, Harold - *The Yemen* (John Murray, London, 1963), pp. 65-7
[55] Yapp, M.E. - *The Near East since The First World War* (Longman, Harlow, 1996), p. 380

what was a prospective minimal return[56]. Fortunately for the Government of India, the Air Ministry volunteered to take over responsibility for the Defence of Aden. The advantage of air power had been shown by the use of the RAF to protect British interests in Afghanistan, Russia, the North-West Frontier, Somaliland and Iraq, all at much less cost than land action would have created. Therefore, Aden became an Air Command in 1927 and when the Imam's troops invaded Subaihi territory again in 1927, an ultimatum that they would be bombed forced their withdrawal[57]. The Imam had now been warned that further raids would lead to air attacks against his forces, and so when his troops kidnapped two Protectorate chiefs in February 1928, Ta'izz and other sites in the Yemen were bombed[58]. This shook Yemeni morale greatly, and large parts of the Protectorate were evacuated as the Imam revised his opinion about British power. However, there was no attempt at negotiations immediately, in fact there were continued raids across the border, although these were usually ended by the threat of bombing.

The Imam, though, was also in dispute with Ibn Saud (King of the Hijaz and Najd, then King of Saudi Arabia from its creation in 1932) and when Yahya tried to enforce his claim to territory in the north he met with resistance. The resulting conflict meant that the Imam had to come to terms with the British to the south as he did not have the resources to resist pressure coming from both directions. Six weeks of discussion lead to the Treaty of Sana (February 1934) by which the Imam evacuated Audhali territory and released the hostages from Protectorate tribes, in return for which the British saluted the Imam as King of the Yemen and dropped the claim to al-Bayda on the frontier. However, the most important clause in terms of Anglo-Imam relations was Article III which was highly ambiguous and became the source of much controversy. In English the clause read as "The settlement of the question of the southern frontier of the Yemen is deferred …", whereas in Arabic it could be read as "The settlement of the question of the Southern Yemeni area …"[59]. The ambiguity lay in the Arabic word

---

[56] Lunt, James - *Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the Twentieth Century* (Macdonald, London, 1981), p. 134
[57] *ibid.*, pp. 134-5
[58] Ingrams - *op. cit.*, p. 67
[59] Ingrams - *op. cit.*, pp. 68-70

hudud which could be read as either a definite border - which is how the British saw it - or an area of land - which was how the Imam read it. In other words, the authorities in Aden saw this as postponing the question of the exact border between the Yemen and the Protectorate, whereas the Imam saw the Treaty as deferring the issue of the Protectorate as a whole. The negotiations did lead to friendlier relations between the Imam and Aden, but once attempts to develop the Protectorate were finally taken by the British they were viewed by Yahya as infringing the Treaty of Sana, which would cause great problems after World War Two.

The India Office and Stagnation

As noted above, the intended policy of the Government of India towards South Arabia was non-intervention, although this was difficult in practice given the ambitions of the Imam to rule over the Protectorate. However, even the British responses towards the Imam were to be as limited as possible to avoid extending British territory and responsibilities in the area. Therefore for the twenty years after World War One, little was done to enhance the development of Aden or extend British influence in the hinterland.

Part of the problem was the inter-departmental differences that had plagued British policy-making as regards South Arabia for almost a century, largely due to reluctance to bear the costs of running Aden. India Office and Foreign Office tactics to deal with the Ottoman Empire had frequently been very different, in particular at the turn of the century over the al Darayjah incident when the Government of India won, but more often than not the more cautious Foreign Secretary would prevail. During World War One the India Office, Foreign Office and Service Ministries had all been involved in the running of Aden, and after 1918 the Colonial Office became involved as it took over the running of the Protectorate. This division of responsibility between India Office and Colonial Office would cost Aden dear as it missed out on the constitutional advances occurring in the other colonies and imperial interests[60]. Increasingly the view

[60] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 255

was taken in London that Aden was an Arab town and so should be taken from Indian Office jurisdiction, but the rivalry between India Office and Colonial Office was such that the former was loathe to relinquish control.

Eventually the Colonial Office did take control of the running of South Arabia, but not until 1937. During the 1920s, the India Office continued to run Aden from Bombay and developments were minimal. Relations with the hinterland were still kept to a minimum, despite the need to counter Imamic intrusion. The arrival of the RAF helped in this, since air proscription meant there was no need to build roads and develop communications with the Protectorate as there was no need for land action. Moreover, to protect the RAF station (and help with the local police when required) the Aden Protectorate Levies (APL) were created in 1928[61]. The APL consisted largely of local Arabs with British officers, but there was a strong Indian influence, such as the uniform, language used, and the number of Indians enrolled, which was resented by the Arab rank and file. However, a large number of the soldiers were taken from Protectorate tribes which did increase contact between the authorities in Aden and the tribes, although not to the extent that development of the hinterland took place, nor was there still much political or economic integration.

The Government of India was not concerned about extending British influence into the hinterland, however. The chief concerns of the officials in Bombay were with events in India, not South Arabia, especially not the expansionist and interventionist policies of the Colonial Office. The Government of India:

> "regarded it (Aden) merely as a military outpost. A fortress on the sea route from Europe to India, with the Protectorate as a kind of glacis or vacuum surrounding it, and keeping unwanted neighbours ... at a distance"[62].

The large Indian community in Aden (numbering over 7,000 by 1931) was rich and powerful enough to make its views heard in Bombay, and it regarded the transfer of the

---

[61] *ibid.*, p. 286
[62] PRO CO 725/96/4 - *Minute by Sir Bernard Reilly*, 7 Feb. 1949

colony to the Colonial Office as harmful to their interests[63]. This in turn saw the Government of India pressure London, which meant that whenever Aden was discussed in Government the agreement of several departments was required (the Foreign Office and the Service Ministries were also involved), which in turn paralysed policy. The result was that officials in Aden had a lack of funds and felt neglected, and relations between Aden and Bombay turned sour. The resulting administrative uncertainty paralysed development as London tried to turn control of Aden to the Colonial Office whilst Bombay resisted.

The Colonial Office and Advisory Treaties

Once the Government of India lost control of Aden, however, things started to change radically. The appointment of Sir Bernard Reilly as Resident in 1930 saw the start of a more expansionist 'forward policy'. Reilly, like many of his predecessors, wanted to free Aden from the grip of Bombay and, unlike his predecessors, he succeeded. In 1932, Aden was removed from under the jurisdiction of the Bombay Legislative Assembly and it was transferred to the authority of the Viceroy of India[64]. It was not until 1937 that the Colonial Office took over the administration of Aden, but even before that Reilly was able to re-orientate policy towards the hinterland as Bombay had become divorced from events in South Arabia. Gradually the 'Fortress Aden' concept was abandoned, and schemes to tie Aden more closely with the hinterland came into being. Aden's medical services were extended into the Protectorate, the education service was also opened up more, and the Aden Police, which had been an Indian unit, went through a process of Arabisation. These changes did not have an immediate effect, but they showed a change in attitude by the British.

Economically, Aden continued to prosper, again surviving competition with Perim for coal bunkering. In fact Aden survived the world-wide depression in 1929-30 whilst Perim collapsed, largely due to the construction of an oil-bunkering depot (established

[63] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 445
[64] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 17

in 1920) which helped ensure Aden's continuing prosperity as oil-fired ships took over from coal-fired ones[65]. However, the Protectorate was still seeing little of this increasing prosperity, especially after the Imam closed the road between Aden and the Yemen in 1932 which resulted in a slump in the landward trade. Moreover, the increasingly industrial Aden meant that the proportion of trade linking it with the decidedly non-industrial hinterland was diminishing.

The British in Aden, though, were attempting to improve links between colony and Protectorate. Once the Colonial Office had taken over Aden, a forward policy was followed in the Protectorate to try to bring it closer economically, administratively, and politically to both Aden and the British. In order to achieve these aims, a series of Advisory Treaties were signed with various hinterland rulers from 1937 until 1957, the first being with the Qu'ayti Sultan[66]. These treaties went further than the earlier protectorate ones by stating the ruler would "take British advice on matters not relating to religion"[67]. In theory the Advisory Treaties would allow the reform of the hinterland societies to bring them closer to Aden. However, the funds available to the rulers were generally very small, and what little they received was generally spent on keeping their tribes content by supplying arms and ammunition.

British influence expanded as did their knowledge about South Arabia through the Political Officers who were sent to different rulers as their advisers. Initially the numbers of Political Officers were few, although they were able to help re-organise tribal forces and introduce a certain amount of stability to the Protectorate. This was especially true of Harold Ingrams in the Eastern Aden Protectorate (EAP) who convinced the many tribes of the Hadhramaut to sign thousands of truces in 1937, known as 'Ingrams Peace', and ended the conflicts that had threatened the disintegration of Hadhrami society[68]. The influence of the ruler, though, frequently suffered as the imposition of British advice often undermined the traditional tribal

---

[65] Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 291-2
[66] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 17
[67] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 303
[68] *ibid.*, pp. 302-3 - 'Ingrams Peace' was also the principal reason for the more developed status of the EAP compared to the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP) by 1967

structure by choosing one side against another (with the Imam generally choosing the other side) and so extending feuds which might have otherwise died down. Moreover, what development that was introduced to the Protectorate generally had a negative effect. The extension of 'roads' (many were little more than tracks, Tarmaced roads were not established until the 1950s, and even then they did not extend far into the Protectorate) and introduction of motorised transport in the 1930s would later destroy the traditional livelihood of the camel owners and caravan leaders. Many tribesmen relied on charging customs dues on transport through their territory, another system that the British were determined to put an end to. There were attempts to soften these blows, such as limiting the types of goods that lorries could transport, but these were generally ineffective:

> "the fees for the use of roads were designed not only to give revenue but also, in conjunction with minimum fares, to protect the beduin camel traffic. In fact goods were not allowed to be carried by road unless they were perishable, too heavy for camels, or urgent, in all of which cases the freight charged had to be higher than that which would be charged for camel transport"[69].

Furthermore, after World War Two some tribal groups so resented these invasions of their independence by roads and lorries that they became 'dissidents'. Sir Kennedy Trevaskis describes meeting the Khalilis, a group of rebel tribesmen, in the 1950s and asking them for an explanation for their actions. They explained that:

> "It was the road which McIntosh had made through their country in 1951, to link the Upper Aulaqi Sheikhdom with Aden. This was their country and within it they alone had a right to propose or dispose. By making a road through it McIntosh had been as much an aggressor as if he had invaded their encampments and stolen their goats. They had been robbed of their right to levy tolls and protection money off travellers across their land and with the appearance of motor traffic on the road they had also been robbed of their former income as cameliers"[70].

The extension of British interests in South Arabia was to cost the livelihood of many tribesmen, who would later rebel against these intrusions by the Government in Aden.

---

[69] Ingrams, Harold - *Arabia and the Isles* (John Murray, London, 1966), p. 298
[70] Trevaskis, Kennedy - *Shades of Amber* (Hutchinson, London, 1968), p. 85

These developments were advantageous for trade and commerce in Aden and made it easier to move freight, and also troops, around the Protectorate. However, there was little attempt to replace the loss of income and livelihood of those who lived there. The funds for development of the Protectorate were mainly used by the rulers to keep their tribes happy with gifts of arms and ammunition rather than create other forms of employment and income. The one major exception to this was the introduction of cotton to the Abyan region (straddling the Fadhli and Lower Yafi'i Sultanates) in 1940, and, with the establishment of the Abyan Development Board in 1947, by 1954 there were 45,000 acres irrigated[71]. The result was prosperity in the area and a settled community emerged, but Abyan was the exception rather than the rule as the British attempted to create self-supporting chiefdoms[72]. Moreover, one of the main reasons that cotton was introduced to Abyan was as insurance in case other sources were cut off as a result of the war.

During World War Two, Aden reverted to its status as a military base whilst, as in the First World War, the main fighting in the Middle East took place further north. The garrison was reinforced from India and the APL's manpower was increased to 600, although it did not have a very active role, the only attacks on Aden were a few Italian bombing raids and the main function of the colony was as a marshaling port for convoys crossing the Indian Ocean[73]. However, the war did effect Aden in that the increased garrison raised concerns about food supplies, which led to the creation of the 'Khanfar Development Board', the predecessor of the Abyan Cotton Board, in order to develop agriculture. Moreover, a drought swept South Arabia in 1943 and 1944 and this also gave momentum to the development of agriculture, and Political Officers were sent into the most fertile areas of the Protectorate in order to cultivate land. This was a continuation of the forward policy of the late 1930s, and saw increased British influence in the Protectorate. Furthermore, troops were sent in to end feuding which was limiting economic activity in Beihan, order was imposed and an administration

---

[71] Gavin - *op. cit.*, pp. 314-5

[72] Cotton development was also extended to Lahej and, to a lesser extent, Dathina in the 1950s, but without the same success as in Abyan, although it can still be viewed as a British attempt to produce prosperity in South Arabia

[73] Lunt - *op. cit.*, p. 139-40

established. This became the fore-runner of other administrations in the Protectorate which saw a further erosion of the traditional tribal structure and the extension of British control from March 1944 when the idea was approved by the Colonial Office[74]. However, the problem with these new administrations was that they depended almost entirely on British funds for survival, and so had to accept Whitehall's orders for using the money. Whilst there were benefits for South Arabia, such as the building of schools and medical centres, the reality was that any attempt to create a self-sufficient Protectorate was unlikely to succeed given the limited amount of good agricultural land and water available.

Conclusion

By the end of World War Two, the forward policy of Reilly and the Colonial Office was beginning to take shape through the Advisory Treaties. The first hundred years of British rule in Aden under the Government of India had seen the Colony be valued only for its strategic location and position on the world's shipping lanes. There had been little attempt to extend British influence beyond Aden, other than to provide a defensive barrier in the hinterland from the threat from the Ottomans and the Imam of Yemen. Under the Colonial Office, this policy was to change to a more expansionist one which sought to extend British influence in South West Arabia, albeit with the emphasis still on creating a protective barrier for Aden. However, this policy was also to create new problems for the British as it involved the Aden authorities more than ever before in the affairs of the Protectorate. The developments that were introduced by the Political Officers would later help to erode the authority of the rulers (although boost the wealth of a limited circle of followers), remove the income of many tribesmen, and destroy the traditional society of the hinterland. These developments created a ruling class that were almost entirely dependent on British munificence, and a large group of discontented tribesmen that would later take up arms and be a useful weapon for the Imam in his campaign against the Protectorate and the British in Aden.

---

[74] Gavin - *op. cit.*, p. 312-3

Chapter Two: The Middle East after World War Two

Introduction

Despite the Allied victory in World War Two, the British economy, and nation as a whole, was drained of its resources and power. Nevertheless, the British Empire remained intact and many within Whitehall believed that this position should be maintained. Possibly surprisingly, even under Attlee's Labour Government (1945-1951), the decisions to withdraw from empire were minimal. In fact, the major change to the British Empire, Indian independence in 1947, had been decided in the 1930s. However, the ability of any British government, either Labour or Conservative, to play a world role was no longer as great as it had been. The decline of the former world 'superpowers' of Britain and France was not inevitable, but was increasingly likely after the immense effort and difficulties both countries underwent between 1939 and 1945. Their earlier global dominance was further challenged by the rise of two new powers, both opposed to British and French colonialism, which were themselves beginning to dominate the world stage: the United States and the Soviet Union. The start of the Cold War between the two superpowers saw the globe bisected into two spheres of influence, with Britain increasingly unable to compete. However, the decline from international power to regional influence was not rapid, and the decision to hold onto such colonies as Aden until the late 1960s showed that those in power did not see Britain as the second-rate player it was becoming. Whilst this could be regarded as a 'rearguard action' in the face of more powerful competition, it can also be seen as determination to remain a global force. It should also be noted that, whilst Britain was unable to compete directly with either of the superpowers, they were a useful ally for the Americans who had little influence in the Middle East in the period immediately following 1945.

Decline of the British Empire and the Cold War

British Overseas Policy after 1945

The only power that was in a position to challenge Britain in the Middle East following World War Two was the Soviet Union which had troops in northern Iran and was pressuring Turkey for access through the Bosphorus. In the Arab world, however, Britain still appeared to reign supreme and unchallenged with her massive military bases in Palestine and the Canal Zone, a situation which was to change drastically in the following decade. To a large extent, British foreign, defence and colonial policies in the Middle East in the twenty years following 1945 were aimed at preserving this paramount position in the region. This task, however, was increasingly difficult to achieve given the opposition of Arab Nationalism, the weakness of the British economic situation and mounting domestic pressure for demobilisation.

The Labour Government of Clement Attlee which came to power in 1945 was divided between those who wanted to maintain the empire, such as Foreign Secretary Ernest Bevin, and those who wanted overseas commitments cut, the 'Little Englanders' such as the Prime Minister. Whilst Bevin and Attlee agreed on many issues and formed a formidable partnership in policy-making, there were differences over the extent to which Britain would be able to maintain a world role. Bevin sought to preserve Britain as a great power with the Middle East as the principal pillar of the British position in the world. Attlee, however, was more sceptical of Britain's military and economic ability to remain a great power in the Middle East and he was willing to recognise that British power had diminished and that a withdrawal from empire was potentially necessary. The Foreign Secretary believed, though, that by transforming the unequal colonial relationship with the Arabs into a more equal partnership, with Britain and the Middle Eastern states working together for mutual advantage, then the military burden would be reduced[1]. Unfortunately the lack of British resources and the fact that the

[1] Louis, Wm. Roger - *The British Empire in the Middle East* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984), pp. 4 & 17-8

Government's allies in the region were the unpopular old reactionary rulers limited this policy of cooperation. Instead, the British position continued to be maintained through direct rule in Palestine (to 1947), Sudan and Aden, and indirectly (through local allies) in the Gulf, Iraq, Transjordan and Egypt.

Bevin had the support of the Chiefs of Staff, an important voice in policy-making, who feared a British withdrawal from the Middle East would allow the Soviets to threaten Africa and the oil supplies in the Gulf[2]. However, the loss of Palestine in 1948, and then of the Canal Zone in 1954 severely damaged British aspirations to play the role of the great power in the Middle East. The policy of Attlee, with the advantage of hindsight, was more realistic since to have cut losses and withdrawn after World War Two would have saved a lot of expense and effort. Bevin's attempts to consolidate Britain's position in the Middle East failed in the face of regional instability, Arab nationalism, and resentment of the British military and economic presence. Nevertheless, despite the problems in Egypt and Palestine (until the creation of the state of Israel in 1948) and the eviction of the Anglo-Iranian Oil Company following the Nationalist coup in 1951, British policymakers still believed that the UK could play the role of world power in the region, a belief maintained up to and beyond the humiliation of Suez in 1956.

Part of the reason for the continuation of the belief in Britain as a world power, at least as far as the Middle East was concerned, was that very little had changed in the region following six years of a Labour Government. Whilst the Palestine mandate had been relinquished and the military bases at Cairo and Alexandria evacuated, there were still military installations in the Canal Zone, Sudan, Libya, Cyprus, Jordan, Iraq, Aden and Bahrain. During the 1950s, however, this situation changed quite drastically as the Conservative Governments of Churchill, Eden and Macmillan had to learn to deal with the new revolutionary Arab regimes that replaced the old 'politics of notables'[3].

---

[2] *ibid.*, pp. 27-8

[3] The 'politics of notables' was Albert Hourani's term for the local elite that co-operated with the colonial powers throughout the Middle East, for a summary of the relationship between the notables and the European powers see Hourani, Albert - *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1991), pp. 279-98

Elsewhere in the Empire, the move towards independence was accepted by the British, and the Conservatives, in particular under Harold Macmillan as Prime Minister from 1956 and Iain Macleod as Colonial Secretary, were willing to instigate de-colonisation in Africa. Macmillan's 'wind of change' speech in South Africa in February 1960 announced Britain's support for African independence urging the European settlers to accept that "this growth of national consciousness is a political fact"[4]. However, the Middle and Far East, under both Labour and Conservative Governments were viewed as the two areas where Britain could still play a world role, and so any growth of national consciousness was generally either ignored or resisted.

Britain's determination to remain in a position of influence 'East of Suez' (the term for the regions surrounding the Indian Ocean to the north, west and east, primarily the Middle and Far East) dominated foreign and defence policy in the late 1950s and 1960s. The original reason behind the British presence in these regions was primarily to defend the Indian Empire as well as protect the trade routes between India and Britain. However, the granting of independence to India and Pakistan in August 1947 removed the 'Jewel of the Crown' and should have consequently reduced the value of colonies such as Aden in the minds of overseas policymakers. This, though, was not the case. A combination of factors saw the continued presence of British troops and overseas civil servants in Aden, Singapore, Bahrain and elsewhere for another twenty years (more in certain cases). As regards the Middle East the region's value was primarily as the world's leading supplier of oil, and British troops in Egypt (until 1954), Cyprus (until 1960) and Aden (to 1967) were seen as vital to protecting the increasingly valuable commodity. Another factor was the desire to keep the USSR out of the region, as well as provide a buffer zone against Soviet attempts to gain access to the rich mineral deposits in Africa. Finally, the British military and political presence in the Middle and Far East was a useful support for American foreign policy in the east of Suez region, and enabled Washington to concentrate its resources elsewhere. These factors all served to justify the continued British presence east of Suez, despite the ever-increasing cost, financially and politically, to successive Governments.

---

[4] Lapping, Brian - *End of Empire* (Granada, London, 1985), pp. 13-4

The main problem, however, was that there was rarely any defined aims, rather policy seemed to be dictated by reacting to events. Given the economically, physically and mentally exhausted state of Britain following the Second World War, a reappraisal of overseas policy should have taken place. Instead, the view in both Government and among the population at large was of the country as a world power, a belief that was not properly challenged until the Suez crisis. Whilst Attlee wanted to instigate cuts overseas after World War Two, the Chiefs of Staff, with Bevin's support, refused to countenance cutting troop numbers in the Middle East[5]. Even when the defence chiefs were forced to evacuate the Canal Zone base in 1954, there was no re-examination of British defence and foreign policy or any attempt to cut commitments. Moreover, at the same time as successive Governments in the 1950s were reinforcing that Britain would not cut its overseas commitments (namely the continued presence of troops in the east of Suez region), the actual manpower of the army had been reduced by 45,000 men by 1956[6]. The nuclear deterrent was the priority of the Defence White Papers of the mid-1950s, whereas the overseas defence role was treated as a side issue, and the poor mobility of the British forces during the Suez crisis was one result of this failing.

Even the humiliating climbdown over the Suez Crisis failed to dent the view of Britain as a world power, despite being forced to withdraw troops from Egypt because of American pressure[7]. The British response to Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal had been slow and poorly organised. The inability of British troops to move quickly into the area to support Government policy should have sent clear warnings to the defence chiefs that tactical changes were necessary if Britain were to remain a power capable of efficient military action. The 1957 White Paper, though, maintained the traditional view of Britain as the dominant power in the Middle and Far East, referring to the obligations to defend Aden, the Persian Gulf territories, the protectorates in south-east Asia and the external defence of Malaya[8]. However, both the Prime Minister, Harold Macmillan, and the Defence Secretary, Duncan Sandys, still saw tactical nuclear weapons as the answer to the need to cut costs whilst maintaining a

[5] Louis, Wm. Roger - *op. cit.*, pp. 28-34
[6] Darby, Phillip - *British Defence Policy East of Suez 1947-1968* (OUP, London, 1973), p. 18
[7] Cleveland, William L. - *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1994), p. 294
[8] Darby, Phillip - *op. cit.*, p. 75

world role, and so army manpower was further reduced to 375,000 by 1962[9]. This blindness to the need for tactically mobile forces that were able to be flown into a trouble spot at short notice was surprising given the failure at Suez. However, the inability of air power to quell the troubles in Oman in July 1957 did see the modification of British tactical thinking as regards defence of overseas interests[10]. The Oman operation also strengthened the argument for better airlift capability, the need for acclimatisation, and for rapid action to avoid political repercussions.

The one lesson, however, that took a long time to be learned was that the actual British presence overseas was a serious source of grievance to many of the indigenous peoples of the colonies, mandates and protectorates that were still present on the edges of the Indian Ocean right up to the end of the 1960s. The fact was that the east of Suez policy as a whole was never truly challenged in Parliament. The Services themselves were too busy either defending their own interests or carrying out operations so that long-term decisions about overseas commitments were never taken until Healey was forced to implement further cuts to his defence budget in the 1966 White Paper. Had there been the necessary reappraisal of the British presence in the Middle and Far East following the Second World War, then the various Government departments could have implemented long-term policies to deal with the necessary cuts in expenditure. As it was, the commitment to the world role that infected both Conservative and Labour leaders meant that Britain stayed in many parts of the empire longer than they were wanted.

American Involvement in the Middle East

American foreign policy immediately following World War Two was dominated by the same concern that would drive successive Presidents and their policy advisers after 1945, namely the containment of the Soviet Union and communism. After the end of the War, the Soviet Union and the USA would go from being allies to enemies, albeit

[9] *ibid.*, p. 118
[10] *ibid.*, pp. 13-2

from a distance and using their respective client states to fight their ideological war, the Cold War. Truman (President to 1952) therefore, like his successors, saw the biggest threat to American interests coming from Moscow, and the attempts to counter that threat would be the *raison d'être* of Washington foreign policy from 1945 to the 1990s. In that respect they shared a concern with the British. However there was also a general disapproval of European colonialism and imperialism which at times saw the two allies in disagreement over their respective policies in the Middle East. Nevertheless, the dominant position of Britain in the Middle East in 1945 meant that the US needed to rely on them in order to defend Western interests. Therefore, whilst there were differences of opinion, the two powers usually presented a united front to the perceived threat from the Soviet Union.

Under Truman the Middle East as a region was treated as a low priority, the only major problem being the question of the Palestine mandate. However, Washington's policy at this time was more affected by local events, in particular the Israeli victory in the conflicts of 1948-1949, rather than actually driven by a definite aim or strategy, in other words it was reactive rather than proactive. This lack of coherence was shown by the inconsistency of Truman's attitude towards the region, such as approving the State Department document which advocated giving the Negev desert to the Arabs and then signing a letter to Chaim Weizmann (the first President of Israel) extolling the utility of the Negev for Israel[11]. The only other attention given to the region was the issuing of the Truman doctrine in 1947 granting aid to Greece and Turkey to help them resist Soviet pressure since Britain was no longer able to defend these states from outside intervention[12]. The fear was that without foreign aid both Turkey and Greece would come under Soviet control, and then the other Middle East states would follow suit. However, it was probably only because Britain was incapable of financially and militarily supporting Greece and Turkey that the US became involved, otherwise the two states would probably have been left to British concern, as the Arab world was.

---

[11] Spiegel, Stephen L. - *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan* (University of Chicago Press Ltd., London 1985), p. 49
[12] Cleveland, William L. - *op. cit.*, p. 260

The low priority given to the Middle East would change under Truman's successor, President Eisenhower (1952-1960), largely because the dominating foreign policy issue remained Soviet containment. The increased attention given to the region was due to American apprehension at intensified Soviet activities in the Arab world following the death of Stalin in March 1953[13]. The Soviets began to cultivate relations with previously ignored governments in Africa and Asia, including 'reactionary' regimes, in order to counter the expansion of Western influence. However, Eisenhower's policies failed in their attempts to forestall the Soviet Union establishing themselves in the Arab world. Moreover, relations between the Arab states and the West actually deteriorated rather than improved, largely thanks to the actions of America, Britain and France. The Tripartite Declaration by the US, Britain and France in May 1950 had established the three countries' opposition to the use of force by any power in the Middle East to achieve their aims[14]. However, this policy was unpopular with both Israel and the Arab states. Both sides viewed the Declaration as discriminating and were frustrated in their desire for military expansion. This was especially true after France supplied Israel with arms in 1954 and 1955, an act which was justifiably regarded as upsetting the regional military balance, and helped force Nasser to seek military supplies from the Soviets via the Czech arms deal[15].

Eisenhower's strategy to limit Soviet expansion centred on regional alliances, such as having Turkey and Greece join the North Atlantic Treaty Organisation (NATO) in 1952[16]. The attempt to create a similar organisation in the Middle East would fail however, largely thanks to America getting cold feet and withdrawing its support. The Baghdad Pact was an alliance between Turkey, Iraq, Britain, Pakistan and Iran, reached through a series of treaties in 1954 and 1955[17]. One of the main weaknesses of the Pact was the lack of Arab signatories, with the pro-West government of Iraq being the sole adherent from the Arab world. This in itself was enough to limit the efficacy of the

---

[13] Stookey, Robert W. - *America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, 1975), pp. 129-30
[14] Yapp, M.E. - *The Near East since the First World War* (Longman, London, 1996), p. 407
[15] *ibid.*, p. 407
[16] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 260
[17] *ibid.*, p. 261

Pact, especially as Nasser's Egypt sought to prevent any other Arab states joining[18]. The lack of Arab signatories meant that American and European influence in the region was limited to those states which were already aligned to the West. Furthermore, the refusal of America to be a signatory meant that the Pact had little military strength, a weakness which rendered the Baghdad Pact ineffective. The US drew back from the Baghdad Pact in 1955 because it was unpopular in the Arab world. This meant, though, that the regional defence Pact was both weak and unpopular rather than just unpopular, and so even more incapable of containing Soviet expansion.

Both Eisenhower and his Secretary of State, John Foster Dulles, underestimated the intensity of feelings on both sides of the Arab-Israeli dispute. Their attempts to manoeuvre between the interests of both sides, as well as those of Britain and France, saw all four groups alienated. The Israelis needed American support to maintain their military position, but American unease at arming one protagonist over another meant the Israelis had to look elsewhere, principally France. The Arabs were similarly disappointed by their inability to secure arms from Washington. In return, the non-aligned position of Nasser which saw Egypt stay aloof from the Baghdad Pact displeased Washington who saw non-alignment to the Western cause as alignment to Moscow. Finally, American opposition to the Franco-British-Israeli position over Suez in 1956, which was designed to contain the Soviet Union, failed. The Americans were viewed in the same light as the European colonialist powers by the Arab world, and relations between Washington and Britain and France cooled considerably.

The fractional nature of Arab politics, with the almost constant rivalry between the regional states, was a factor in hampering American policy as close relations with one state impaired relations with another, especially as the US was growing increasingly close to Israel. Initially, relations between Nasser's Egypt and Washington were good, but this relationship would deteriorate as both sides increasingly viewed the other with suspicion. Eisenhower and Dulles's preference for the conservative monarchies of the region helped to damage America's standing in the Middle East since the new Arab nationalist states felt isolated. This view, in combination with the Tripartite

[18] Yapp - *op. cit.*, pp. 405-6

Declaration, probably helped push Nasser towards the Soviet Union (via Czechoslovakia) in his quest for arms for Egypt in 1955. The Eisenhower Doctrine of 1957 further entrenched the belief among the Arab Nationalist states that American policy was part of Western imperialism, despite the President's aim that it would be a unilateral statement of policy to support Arab independence. The problem was that the Doctrine gave Eisenhower the right to use American forces, if requested, to support an independent state against international communism, which was simply viewed as imperialism in a different form. The only two occasions on which it was used were Jordan in January 1958 when 'international communism' was a remote threat and America supported British intervention, and Lebanon in July 1958 when US troops were airlifted into the country to support President Chamoun. Fortunately in Lebanon, Chamoun saw sense and stepped aside as President allowing the crisis to pass, otherwise a far more serious conflict could have occurred[19]. Overall, however, Eisenhower's policy towards the Middle East was largely a failure given that the only group pleased were the oil companies since policy centered on the conservative, oil-producing Arab states, in particular Saudi Arabia.

Under President Kennedy, though, there was another shift in American policy as the US attempted to appease the Arab Nationalists, in particular Nasser. Admittedly, Kennedy benefited from a largely peaceful period of events in the region, the only problematic issue being the Yemeni coup and ensuing Republican-Royalist civil war. However, the Kennedy administration also took a less bipolar view of the world than Eisenhower had, which meant that a more generous policy was taken towards many of the non-aligned nations, such as increased and depoliticised aid. This saw the level of aid to Egypt surpass $200 million with the US supplying 50% of the country's wheat and Kennedy informing Nasser beforehand of American decisions which could affect the UAR[20]. The improved relations between the two Presidents survived Nasser's verbal attacks on Saudi Arabia and Jordan in 1962, and the sale of US Hawk Missiles to Israel in September 1962, but the Egyptian intervention in the Yemen was to prove a far more

[19] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, pp. 316-7

[20] Nadelmann, Ethan - 'Setting the Stage: American Policy toward the Middle East, 1961-66', *International Journal of Middle East Studies*, Vol. 14 (1982), pp. 435-457 - Nadelmann got his statistics from Copeland, Miles - *The Game of Nations* (College Notes, New York, 1969), p. 268

difficult issue[21]. In fact, the recognition of the Republican regime in Yemen, despite British opposition, and the continued aid to Egypt actually had given the Americans little leverage over Nasser. This in turn, especially under Kennedy's successor Johnson, saw American-Egyptian relations reach a low point, especially as the various American sponsored attempted peace deals between Egypt and Saudi Arabia over the Yemen failed to achieve the end of the civil war. Kennedy's policy towards the Middle East had seen a new attitude among American policymakers towards Egypt, but ultimately failed to achieve any more real success than Eisenhower's bipolar view had, the only exception being the temporarily better relationship with Nasser.

American relations with Egypt deteriorated under Johnson, who was viewed as pro-Zionist by the Arab Nationalists given his opposition to Eisenhower's threat of sanctions against Israel in 1957[22]. There was increasing hostility towards America by Nasser in the mid-1960s as frustration with the Yemeni conflict increased on all sides. Furthermore, the Soviet Union reassessed its approach to the Middle East, renewing overtures towards Egypt. The divergence of US and UAR interests was highlighted by the visits of Khruschev to Cairo and Levi Eshkol (Israeli Prime Minister) to Washington in 1964. However, with the onset of the Vietnam War, America became increasingly disinterested in Egypt as other concerns took over. This was especially true as the Soviets became increasingly unwilling to challenge the international status quo at the time. The lessening danger of Soviet expansion in the region, therefore, saw the Middle East's priority rating among American policymakers decrease until the Six Day War of 1967. The ineffectiveness of Nasser's troops in both Yemen and against Israel in 1967 underlined Egypt's status as a subsidiary concern since it was increasingly unable to disrupt American interests. This was especially true following the withdrawal of UAR troops from Yemen in 1967, thereby removing a threat to American oil interests in Saudi Arabia.

American policy towards the Middle East in the twenty years following World War Two was dominated by the same concern that dominated policy towards any region of

---

[21] *ibid.*
[22] *ibid.*

the world, the need to contain Soviet expansion. The subsidiary concern of protecting oil supplies was important, but largely left to the British from their military bases until the mid-1960s. In fact, successive American Presidents viewed the world in bipolar terms, a 'them and us' view which frequently alienated non-aligned states, such as Egypt. The only President to achieve any kind of positive relationship with the Arab Nationalists was Kennedy, but even he failed to gain any kind of powerful leverage over Nasser who was able to receive aid and threaten American oil interests by invading Yemen and attacking Saudi Arabia. Therefore American policy in the Middle East before the Six Day War failed to achieve any lasting benefit in the struggle against 'international communism'. However, the Soviet leadership similarly failed to fully establish themselves in a region noted for its rivalries and fractious politics.

The Soviet Union

Whilst the Soviet Union did, unlike the Americans, have a presence in the Middle East following World War Two, like their erstwhile allies they were not at first overly concerned with the Arab world. The failure to win over Turkey and Greece following the Truman Doctrine and the withdrawal from northern Iran in 1946 were the only attempts to win influence in the Middle East as a region until the mid-1950s[23]. These failures in the 'northern tier' countries (the states bordering the Soviet Union to the south and the Middle East to the north) were not of undue concern given Stalin's concentration on Eastern Europe. However, following Stalin's death, a more proactive policy to leapfrog the northern tier and win a foothold in the Arab world took place, starting with the Czech arms deal with Nasser in 1955[24].

There was considerable frustration among certain Arab states, in particular Nasser's Egypt, with the strings attached to American aid under Eisenhower. The Tripartite Declaration restricted arms purchases, and the Western powers' support for Israel, saw first Egypt, and then Syria, Iraq and others turn to the Soviet Union for military and

[23] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 260
[24] Mansfield - *A History of the Middle East* (Viking, London, 1991), p. 253

economic aid. This was not due to any overt sympathy for communism, but rather the Soviets were seen as a useful counter-balance to the Americans. Thus under Khruschev's more expansionist foreign policy, the non-aligned Arab states were able to play off the Soviets against the Americans since both were willing to aid a country perceived as a potential ally in their international proxy war. However, following the crushing defeat of the Arab countries against Israel in 1967, the freedom of the Arab states to dictate their terms was eroded and most became dependent upon one or other of the two superpowers.

The Soviet clients were mainly the 'revolutionary' Arab states such as Syria, Iraq and, to a lesser extent, Egypt. However, in the 1950s and 1960s, the Soviets military capacity could not match that of the USA, and so Moscow was unable to support its clients with direct intervention, as shown during the Cuban missile crisis in 1962 and when Israel threatened Damascus during the Six Day War. Therefore, Khruschev had to rely on careful political expansion, avoiding direct confrontations with the West and seeking to exploit regional instabilities. The Middle East was a prime candidate for Soviet expansion in the 1950s and 1960s given the possibilities of the 'Arab Cold War' (see below) and the frequently poor relations between the West and the 'revolutionary' Arab states. The prime candidate for Soviet aid was Nasser, and Egypt was duly courted with military and economic support in the mid-1960s as UAR-American relations deteriorated over the Yemeni civil war. This in turn became near-dependence of Egypt (and Syria and Iraq) on the Soviets following the Six Day War when the UAR's army needed drastic rebuilding. The Americans in turn tended to support Israel and the conservative Arab monarchies (Saudi Arabia, Jordan). Whilst there were exceptions to this situation, in particular Sadat's abrogation of the Soviet treaty in 1976, the two superpowers tended to carve up the Middle East into two camps following the June War[25].

However, before the Six Day War in June 1967 the Soviets were never a major factor in Middle Eastern politics, other than as a perceived threat to Western interests. Admittedly, the Czech arms deal had introduced the Soviet Union into the regional

[25] Yapp - *op. cit.*, p. 228

politics of the time, but until Brezhnev built up the Soviet military into a force capable of challenging the Americans in the 1970s, the Soviets could not get directly involved in the region. However, the perceived threat was important for dictating both British and American policy towards the region. The British base in Aden was viewed as vital for the defence of Western interests in the Arabian Peninsula and Persian Gulf from the expansion of 'international communism', despite American apprehension at European colonialism. Moreover, Soviet aid was a useful tool for the Arab nationalists to play off against the Americans in order to receive further support. Therefore, whilst there was no real direct role played by the Soviet leadership in the Middle East before the late 1960s, to British and American policymakers the threat of such a role was enough to affect their own actions.

The Arab Cold War

The rise of Gamel Abd al-Nasser and the Suez Crisis

The Free Officers Revolt of 1952 in Egypt was a major upheaval in the Middle East and served as the model for the series of revolutions and coups that affected most other states in the Arab world over the next ten years. The nominal leader was General Naguib, but he was merely a figurehead for the group of officers who took control of the country[26]. The most important of these officers was Colonel Gamel Abd al-Nasser who would become President of Egypt from 1954 until his death in 1970, as well as the dominant figure in Arab Nationalism throughout the region. Nasser, through his desire to break Egypt free from its British-dominated monarchy, embodied the hopes of many Arabs throughout the region, and with his success in achieving the British withdrawal from the Canal Zone through the 1954 treaty was seen to be successful. However, his greatest success was in resisting Britain and France during the Suez crisis in 1956, a victory which Nasser would frequently find hard to live up to.

[26] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 289

The Suez conflict arose from the conflicting ambitions of rising Arab Nationalism and fading European imperialism. The Anglo-American attempt to create a regional defence pact to contain the Soviets, the Baghdad Pact, was rejected by Nasser, and his vociferous denunciation ensured that the only Arab state which joined with Britain, Turkey and Pakistan was Iraq, for which it was condemned by Arab Nationalists[27]. Nasser's non-alignment was seen as a snub to Britain, and the refusal of most Arab states to join the Pact frightened off the Americans who were put off by the unpopularity of the organisation, which then further weakened the Baghdad Pact. A further cause of Anglo-Egyptian conflict was in the need for arms to build up the Egyptian army which saw Nasser turn to the Soviet Union via the Czech arms deal in September 1955, a move which angered both Britain and the US as it gave the Soviets their first foothold in the Middle East[28]. This resentment was further exacerbated by Nasser's nationalisation of the Suez Canal in July 1956 following the withdrawal of World Bank funds (under American pressure) for the building of the Aswan dam. To Anthony Eden (British Prime Minister 1955-57) the nationalisation was seen as theft, despite Nasser's offer of compensation[29]. The British Government were further annoyed by Egypt's ability to run the Canal smoothly (with the help of Greek engineers) despite the withdrawal of British and French engineers. In order to punish Nasser, the British and French (who were angered by Egypt's support for the Algerian Nationalists, the FLN) colluded with Israel to invade Egypt[30]. Once Israel invaded Egypt, then British and French troops were also to invade Egypt on the pretext of separating the two sides and impose 'peace'. However, the slow British build-up meant that the plan did not happen until October/November 1956, at which point international outrage, in particular on the part of both the USSR and America, whose reaction the British had underestimated, forced the withdrawal of British and French troops from Egypt. The result was, despite military defeat, a political victory for Nasser and Egypt, whilst the end of Britain as a great power was confirmed by their need to keep the peace

---

[27] Hourani - *op. cit.*, p. 367
[28] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 292
[29] *ibid.*, pp. 292-3
[30] Hourani - *op. cit.*, p. 367

with the US who threatened the devaluation of sterling to keep Eden in line[31]. The American stance greatly angered the British Government, but they had little option other than submitting to Washington's demands given the dependence of Britain on American financial support. Moreover, to rub salt into the British wound, Nasser was left as the outstanding hero of Arab Nationalists throughout the Middle East as he had stood up to two former imperial powers and not only survived but won a significant victory.

The impact of Suez was widespread, giving credibility to Nasser and his regime, providing an example to other Nationalist groups, and established the Egyptian President as a 'bogey figure' to successive British Governments. Moreover, Egypt-Soviet relations improved, with the USSR financing the Aswan dam project and granting military and technical aid, although Nasser's persecution of communist groups in both Egypt and Syria later saw a cooling of relations for a few years[32]. Nasser had also established himself as a figure the Americans saw as beneficial to support given his regional influence and value to the Soviets. Therefore, both superpowers vied to be the main benefactor of the prominent regional power, and so Egypt was able to play off the two sides against each other until after the Six Day War in 1967. However, Nasser's victory and position at the head of Arab Nationalism following Suez was a difficult act to follow. The Egyptian leader remained open to criticism from other Arab Nationalists if he was not 'radical' enough, as well as in constant need of re-establishing his own prestige and Arab Nationalist credentials in the face of accusations of being an Egyptian Nationalist rather than a pan-Arab Nationalist.

The Arab Cold War

Broadly speaking in the Middle East there were two forms of Arab state, the nationalist 'revolutionary' republics, and the 'conservative' monarchies, terms which are very general, but also contained a certain amount of truth. The two sides were in constant

[31] Lapping - *op. cit.*, pp. 275-6
[32] *ibid.*, p. 277

rivalry, but rarely, as with the USSR and USA, in direct conflict, the only occasion of war being the Yemeni civil war which was fought through proxies (see below), just as the international superpowers fought their ideological conflict through regional clients. The revolutionary states were primarily Egypt, Syria and Iraq (after the 1958 revolution), three countries which spent as much time verbally attacking each other as they did carrying out their ideological campaign against the monarchies of Saudi Arabia and Jordan.

The dominant position of Egypt in the Middle East in the 1950s, especially after Suez, enabled it to lead an independent foreign policy, a position which was weakened in the 1960s as inter-Arab rivalry weakened the bargaining power of the Arab clients vis-à-vis their superpower suppliers. At the height of his powers, however, Nasser was able to unify Egypt and Syria into the United Arab Republic (1958-1961) and play off the superpowers to his advantage due to his regional ascendancy[33]. The non-aligned position of Nasser and the UAR, was shown by the refusal to join the Baghdad Pact and the cool reception that the Eisenhower Doctrine received in the Middle East where it was perceived as yet another form of Western imperialism[34]. However, Egypt was only able to maintain this position whilst it held the position of regional superpower, dominating the Middle East and so therefore a useful ally for both the Soviet Union and America to have as a client in their own Cold War. Therefore when Syria seceded from the UAR in September 1961, not only was Nasser's prestige damaged, but it gave ammunition and a potential ally to his rivals, in particular Iraq and Saudi Arabia[35]. The breakdown of the UAR was welcome news to both the Soviets and Americans as it further polarised Arab politics and weakened the strong centre that had been Egypt, enabling the easier penetration of the Arab political system by the superpowers and restricting the independence of an Arab foreign policy.

Nasser's own reaction to Syria's secession was to attack the conservative Arab monarchies, breaking off diplomatic relations with Jordan, denouncing the Saudi

[33] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 295
[34] Mansfield - *op. cit.*, pp. 260-1
[35] Hourani - *op. cit.*, p. 411

regime and blaming the UAR split on a reactionary plot[36]. The blow to his prestige was significant, and Egypt was left largely isolated in the Arab world since the other major 'revolutionary' regime, that of Qassem in Iraq, was a rival rather than an ally. To maintain his position at the head of Arab Nationalism, Nasser had to restore his prestige, an aim which saw Egypt become embroiled in the Yemeni civil war, and also take the lead in opposing Israel. This latter stance was to hit Egypt heaviest as the total defeat of the Egyptian army in the Sinai in June 1967 forced Nasser to rely almost totally on the Soviet Union for aid to rebuild the army[37]. Moreover, the humiliating loss of Egyptian territory on top of the demolition of the army forced Nasser to come to terms with Saudi Arabia and accept aid from his erstwhile rival in return from withdrawing from the Yemen in order to help Egypt recover from the Six Day War[38].

The Arab Cold War was initially a regional conflict with the backing of the international superpowers, but after the Arab defeat in 1967, the Soviets and Americans came to dominate the Middle East, restricting freedom of action among the Arab states. However, at least for a period from the mid-1950s to the mid-1960s, the regional powers had a certain amount of freedom of policy, even being able to play off the Americans and the Soviets against each other. Unfortunately for the Arab Nationalists, they were unable to present a united front, and their own rivalry helped to further weaken an Arab political system already weakened by the 'revolutionary' against 'conservative' conflict. This latter rivalry was for the most part a war of words and diplomacy, a cold war between the two regional superpowers of Egypt and Saudi Arabia, although on one notable occasion it turned into an actual military conflict following the officers coup in Yemen.

The Yemeni Civil War: 'Nasser's Vietnam'

The anti-Imamate coup by a group of Army officers on 27 September 1962 lead to the formation of the Yemen Arab Republic (YAR), and posed an immediate threat to the

[36] Mansfield - *op. cit.*, p. 265
[37] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 321
[38] *ibid.*, p. 319

British position in Aden and south-west Arabia[39]. This combination of Republican regime and potential to threaten the British provided an excellent opportunity for Nasser to restore his Arab Nationalist credentials. This became especially true when resistance to the new regime among certain of the Yemeni tribes was organised by the Imam (who had been thought killed in the coup) with the support of Saudi Arabia[40]. The result was a protracted civil war between Republicans backed by the UAR and Royalists backed by Saudi Arabia, Jordan and, covertly, Britain, a conflict which continued past the Six Day War and the withdrawal of Egyptian troops until 1969.

Nasser's commitment to other Arab revolutionary movements meant that when the YAR President Abdullah al-Sallal called for aid in the conflict with the Royalist opposition to the coup, Nasser could not ignore the plea even if he had wanted to[41]. The initial Egyptian expeditionary force which was sent to Yemen days after the coup was not enough however, and the number of Egyptian troops in the country grew to 40,000 by the end of 1963, and there was no reduction in numbers until Nasser agreed to withdrawal in November 1967[42]. The major problems facing the Egyptian troops was unfamiliarity with the country and the lack of a transport infrastructure, forcing the UAR Army to build their own roads. Moreover, whilst the UAR troops had superior technology and weapons, they were fighting in mountainous terrain against tribal troops who knew the geography of the country and whilst they avoided pitched battle were able to keep the Egyptians at bay. Ironically, what the UAR troops underwent in the Yemen against British-backed Royalists was remarkably similar to what their British counterparts were facing to the south against Egyptian-backed Nationalists, albeit on a far larger scale. Eventually, the Egyptians were forced to admit defeat in their attempt to control the entire country and so attempted to dominate the Yemen from the triangle formed by the three major towns of San'a, Ta'iz and Hodeidah. However, even this

---

[39] Balfour-Paul - *op. cit.*, p. 78
[40] Cleveland - *op. cit.*, p. 296
[41] It is possible that Nasser helped to instigate the coup in order to establish a Republican regime within striking distance of the British in Aden (a view held by some in the British establishment at the time), and his reaction was certainly very rapid. However, this debate is outside the scope of this study.
[42] Kerr, Malcolm H. - *The Arab Cold War: Gamal Abd al-Nasir and his rivals, 1958-1970* (OUP, Oxford, 1971), p. 96

was not particularly successful as the Royalists were still able to set ambushes and attack the Egyptian/Republican forces from their mountain bases.

The Royalists' primary backer was Saudi Arabia which supplied gold and weapons, whilst Jordan also acted as financial backers for a time, until the threat of reprisals by Nasser forced King Hussein to back down. Moreover, there was also more covert aid from the British-backed Federation of South Arabia which channeled arms, ammunition and money to the Royalists from the south. There was also much-denied aid from the British themselves, primarily arms, but also a certain number of 'ex-SAS' men who went north to train the Royalists in guerrilla warfare and became involved in the fighting themselves. Whilst there is little direct evidence to prove British involvement in the Yemeni civil war, there was almost certainly considerable indirect and covert support for the Royalists[43]. This policy made sense from a British point of view, as the harder the Royalists made life for the Egyptians in the Yemen, then Nasser would be less able to undermine British rule in the Federation of South Arabia. However, because of fears of international condemnation, there was no direct outside military intervention to support the Royalist cause who were frequently on the verge of defeat, but survived with Saudi aid and superior knowledge of the terrain they were fighting in.

There were attempts at peace between the two sides, with Nasser and King Feisal of Saudi Arabia meeting to negotiate a settlement at Khamr in May 1965 and then Jidda in August 1965. However, Nasser was unwilling to withdraw his troops and see a Republican regime defeated, despite the increasing unpopularity of the Egyptian presence among many Yemenis who saw the UAR troops as a form of colonial force. Moreover, there was little agreement between the Republicans and Royalists at first, especially over the return of the Imamic Hamid ad-Din family to some form of power. A 'third force' did exist among Republicans willing to compromise with moderate Royalists, but the Egyptian stranglehold on the YAR meant that such a move never came about.

---

[43] Various PRO documents refer to the need for covert aid, including a minute from the Foreign Secretary Butler to the Prime Minister Douglas-Home (DEFE 13/417) and a Memo by the Ministry of Defence (DEFE 11/425/2624) - covert retaliatory actions were in fact carried out according to conversations with former overseas civil servants

Ultimately, the Yemeni civil war was a proxy war fought by Egypt and Saudi Arabia using their respective clients, the Republicans and Royalists, in much the same way as the Soviets and Americans used their clients to fight their ideological battles. Moreover, there was no clear victor on either side, just as with many of the conflicts of the Cold War, the most important impact probably being the presence of a third of Egypt's army, its most experienced and battle-ready troops, in the Yemen during the Six Day War. The civil war would probably have been ended far sooner had it not been for the foreign presence as Nasser and, to a lesser extent, Feisal saw advantages out of prolonging their support. In the end none of the parties made any significant gains out of the conflict, the only exceptions being the Americans and Soviets who profited from their clients increased reliance on the superpowers for aid.

Conclusion

The Middle East in the twenty years following the end of World War Two was one of the most significant regions in the world as regards the start of the Cold War, the end of European imperialism, the rise of Arab Nationalism, the Arab-Israeli conflict, and international relations. The decline of Britain as a world power, whilst resisted for so long, was confirmed by Suez, although the British presence in Aden until 1967 was an attempt to deny this reality. This was a period of transition, however, from the old European colonial powers who dominated the Middle East between the wars, to the Cold War which saw the region dominated by the Soviet and American superpowers. In between those two periods there was a brief period of Arab independence from foreign domination with the rise of Nasser and Egypt's ability to follow its non-aligned foreign policy. Following the 1967 Arab-Israeli war, however, that independence was lost, and in the same year the end of the only British colony in the Middle East was confirmed as the shambolic withdrawal from South Arabia saw the establishment of the first, and so far only, Marxist government in the Middle East.

Chapter Three: The Move Towards Federation, 1945-1959

Introduction

After World War Two, Britain remained the paramount power in the Middle East. However, the next ten years saw this position greatly undermined as the decline of Great Britain as a superpower in economic and political terms saw a gradual withdrawal from empire. Despite this, in Aden, the opposite process was occurring as the Advisory Treaties signed with the Sultans, Amirs and Naibs of South Arabia saw an increased British presence from the mid-1940s onwards. In fact, the more territories world-wide that the British granted independence to, the greater the importance of Aden and the Protectorate. The reluctance of successive Governments in London, both Conservative and Labour, to relinquish their perceived world role, meant that Aden was turned into one of the world's busiest ports and, by the early 1960s, one of Britain's two main overseas military bases. The rapid development and increased importance of Aden and, to a lesser extent, the two Protectorates in the two decades after 1945 was in sharp contrast to the previous century of relative neglect.

British Policy in Aden

Aden's Increasing Value

The granting of independence to the Empire of India in August 1947 should have questioned the necessity for a continued British interest in Aden and South Arabia since the colony's location on the sea route to the 'jewel in the crown' had been the prime reason for maintaining a colonial presence there. However, despite the loss of India, and the belief of Prime Minister Attlee in the need to cut overseas commitments, there

was no move to withdraw from all British interests in the region. In fact, British policy-makers continued to see a need for a military presence in the Middle East for twenty years, even as independence was being granted to one country after another during the 1950s and early 1960s. Economically, Aden was also a potentially valuable asset given its location on the trade routes between Europe and the Far East and Australasia, as well as its proximity to the oil fields of Saudi Arabia and the Gulf. Another advantage was the lack of political development in Aden which meant that British control was more complete there than in any other territory in the Middle East. Moreover, the Colony had a politically underdeveloped population which meant that British institutions were safer than in other colonies with more politically active populations agitating for independence. Therefore, the value of Aden increased to British policy-makers and defence chiefs who were reluctant to relinquish their overseas role, but were left with fewer and fewer possible sites for the bases they viewed as necessary to maintain this role[1].

Moreover, economically, Aden was also of increasing value, and no longer solely because of the port and its prime location on the world's sea lanes. The port and shipping did remain the dominant economic interests of the Colony, so much so that by 1964 Aden had the fourth largest bunkering port in the world after London, Liverpool and New York[2]. However, this reliance on shipping was dangerous as the port was dependent on Red Sea shipping, and so on the political situation in the Suez Canal, and the economy of Aden suffered in 1956 and 1967 when the Canal was closed due to conflict. The effect of the Suez crisis in 1956 was that the business of the port dropped by about 20%, and the new Governor, Sir William Luce, commented that,

> "The whole prosperity of this place depends so heavily on the port that even a short interruption of Canal traffic is bound to run us into serious economic difficulties"[3].

---

[1] For British defence policy in this period see Chapter 2
[2] Halliday, Fred - *Arabia Without Sultans* (Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1974), p. 159
[3] PRO CO 1015/1132/1 - *Letter from Sir William Luce to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 15 September 1956

The monthly shipping average at this time fell from 454 vessels a month to 277 in November 1956 and 93 in February 1957, and then from 450 to 140 vessels after the Six Day War in June 1967, highlighting the over-dependency of the port on the Suez Canal[4]. However, the port, whilst being the main source of income, was not the only source of economic prosperity for Aden after the construction of the oil refinery.

The BP oil refinery at Little Aden (Bureika) was opened in July 1954, initially as a replacement for Abadan in Iran (which had been nationalised in 1951) and had a staff of over 2,000 workers[5]. The refinery imported crude oil, mainly from Kuwait, and then exported processed oil to East and South Africa and the Red Sea ports, as well as supplying local shipping companies. The result was that the refinery provided 10% of the GDP, 20% of industrial employment and 75% of export earnings for the Aden economy[6]. There were other smaller industries, such as soft drinks factories, ship-building and repairing, and construction, but the only other major source of employment and economic activity was the military base. This was particularly true once Aden became the headquarters for British Middle East Command and accommodation had to be constructed for the increased numbers of servicemen and their families stationed there in the 1960s. However, one thing true of all these economic activities was their reliance on external conditions outside the control of the local population, and the economy would suffer greatly once the base was withdrawn and the Suez Canal was closed in 1967.

Therefore, there was an economic interest in maintaining the British presence, but the overriding concern of policy-makers was the strategic value of Aden and the duties and obligations of Her Majesty's Government. A memorandum by the Colonial Office for the Chiefs of Staff Committee in 1955 sets out British interests and obligations in Aden Colony and Protectorate at that time with the aim of establishing future policy for South Arabia[7]. There were no obligations to retain control of the Colony, the only exceptions

---

[4] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 159
[5] *ibid.*,, p. 160
[6] *ibid.*, p. 160
[7] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *Her Majesty's Long Range Policy in the Aden Protectorate and Aden Colony*, 28 September 1955

being the British, Indian, Pakistani and Jewish communities which had built up considerable commercial interests in Aden and the British Petroleum Company which had invested large sums of money in building the refinery. The Arab majority of Aden did not count as a "commercial interest" and so were not worth concerning Her Majesty's Government about. As regards British interests, firstly, strategically Aden was not counted as "essential" but was of value as the Overseas Defence Committee commented that:

> "Aden is an important naval and air base for the protection of our lines of communication - both sea and air - and for the offensive operations in the Red Sea, Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean. It will also serve as an air staging post"[8].

In fact, a Joint Planning Staff report criticises the Colonial Office for this view, stating "this seriously under-rates the case" since Aden's value was increasing as a staging post and repair and fuelling base[9]. Secondly, diplomatically, again Aden was not viewed as essential, but still of value since the removal of British influence would damage British prestige in the Middle East. However, because the Colony and Protectorates were the only areas in the Arab Middle East still under the control of a colonial power, then "the voluntary removal of this anomaly would no doubt be welcome to the Arab League and to the anti-colonial Powers generally"[10]. Thirdly, economically Aden's importance had increased with the construction of the oil refinery, and would increase further if oil were discovered in the Protectorates, leading to the conclusion that:

> "Taking these three considerations [strategic, diplomatic and economic] together it is evident that H.M.G. have a strong interest in the maintenance of control of Aden Colony for an indefinite future period; and policy towards the Protectorates can reasonably be considered in the light of this permanent British interest"[11].

The value of Aden was therefore established by the mid-1950s as increasing, albeit not essential. This meant that any move towards independence on the part of the Adenis would not be viewed with enthusiasm by the British who were becoming more and

---

[8] *ibid.*
[9] PRO CO 1015/1212/31 & /33 - *Joint Planning Staff Report*, 5 Oct. 1955
[10] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *op. cit.*
[11] *ibid.*, for policy in the Protectorates, see below

more intent on maintaining their grip on Aden, as shown by the visit of Lord Lloyd in 1956.

Lord Lloyd's Statement

The visit of the Under-Secretary of State for the Colonies in May 1956, Lord Lloyd, was designed to bolster the confidence of the civil service and European business community in Aden who had been disturbed at the recent wave of strikes (see below). The Governor, Sir Tom Hickinbotham, and Lord Lloyd both believed that a statement by the latter to the Aden Legislative Council was desirable as it would strengthen the moderates and convince the nationalists that independence was not a viable option at the time. Hickinbotham had telegrammed the Secretary of State for the Colonies (Alan Lennox-Boyd) proposing a statement to the effect that the British were not leaving, that there was no question of a further constitutional advance, independence "was an absurd idea", and that the only reasonable goal was some degree of internal self-government which was dependent on the political responsibility of the people and their leaders, "a quality which is sadly lacking in both at present"[12].

Fortunately, the final statement was not so crudely worded as Hickinbotham's proposal, but it was still sufficiently strongly worded to dispel any doubts about future British intentions. On 19 May 1956, the members of the Aden Legislative Council were told by Lord Lloyd that,

> "The degree of constitutional development, and the pace at which it can be realised, must depend on the sense of responsibility which is displayed by the people of the Colony and their leaders. There is no reason why you cannot expect to achieve further constitutional development in due course"[13].

---

[12] PRO CO 1015/1202/1 - *Hickinbotham to Colonial Office*, 28 Apr. 1956, also *Records of Yemen 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, p. 127

[13] PRO CO 1015/1202/17 - *Outward Telegram from Commonwealth Relations Office*, 18 May 1956

However, after offering this small promise of future advance, any hope of an independent government is quashed:

> "I should like you to understand that for the foreseeable future it would not be reasonable or sensible or, indeed, in the interests of the Colony's inhabitants, for them to aspire to any aim beyond that of a considerable degree of internal self-government. Therefore whilst I have indicated the type of constitutional advance to which the people in this colony may legitimately wish to aspire, Her Majesty's Government wish to make it clear that the importance of Aden both strategically and economically within the Commonwealth is such that they cannot foresee the possibility of any fundamental relaxation of their responsibilities for the colony. I feel that this assurance will be welcome to you and to the vast majority of the Colony."[14].

This statement, contrary to Lord Lloyd's opinion, was not welcome to the moderates in the Colony who were disappointed that self-government was distant. The nationalists, on the other hand, were satisfied to see the moderates' ambitions suffer a setback and were still determined to achieve independence despite the statement. In fact, the announcement was a political miscalculation which did little to help the British position. 'The News Chronicle' newspaper compared the statement to the Hopkinson declaration that Cyprus could never have full independence and commented that "the Government does not seem to have learned from its bitter experience in Cyprus that it must seek allies rather than keep dependants"[15]. The British had complete control of the Colony and Lord Lloyd's statement reflected their desire to maintain this, but they should have realised after their experiences elsewhere in the Middle East that they needed the support of the moderate politicians. Announcing that there was no immediate possibility of constitutional advance was not a wise move as it strengthened the resolve of the opposition and undermined the moderates who the British were supposed to be supporting.

---

[14] *ibid.*
[15] PRO CO 1015/1202/24 - *Extract from 'The News Chronicle'*, 21 May 1956

There had been constitutional advance in Aden and the population was represented by politicians, but progress had been limited and at the time of Lord Lloyd's statement still well short of internal self-government. The Legislative Council had been established by the Aden Colony (Amendment) Order in Council (1944) and consisted of sixteen members (4 ex officio, 4 official and 8 unofficial) all nominated by the Governor until 1955[16]. All legislation was subject to the Governor's veto, and the move towards self-government and greater local participation in the administration was slow, even compared to other colonies. Beginnings were made, however, and a new constitution was introduced in July 1955 allowing for elections for four seats on the Legislative Council, but the qualification was that electors had to be either British subjects or resident in Aden for two out of the three preceding years[17]. This qualification ruled out the migrant Yemeni and Protectorate labour force which supported the trade unions and meant that of the population of 138,155 in the 1955 census, only 10,820 were eligible to vote[18]. However, it meant that at least there was some form of elected local representation in the administration, although the electoral qualifications ensured that the moderates who supported the British presence won all four seats. The elections also provided the first evidence of a more radical opposition to the British presence in the shape of the United National Front who organised a boycott of them (see below).

There were further constitutional developments towards the end of the 1950s, devolving more responsibility to the local population. The Governor's Annual Report for 1958, 'Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony' commented that "Not only has a colonial Government survived despite the unsympathetic climate of world opinion but it has to a surprising extent remained in effective control"[19]. The report attributed the strength of the British position to the weakness of the opposition and constitutional development. A Municipal Council was formed in March 1958 of 14 elected and six nominated

---

[16] Liebesny, Herbert J. - *Amendment and Legal Development in Arabia: Aden Colony and Protectorate*, The Middle East Journal, Vol. 9, no. 4, Autumn 1955, pp. 385-96
[17] *Records of Yemen: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 93-4
[18] *ibid.*, pp. 95-8
[19] PRO CO 1015/1835/14 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony*, Governor of Aden to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 13 March 1959

members, and in these elections "the more extreme nationalists" headed the polls in the three municipal constituencies. However, "the more moderate politicians of the older generation ... were able to outmanoeuvre the extremists on important issues" and "the three extremists" resigned after six months[20]. A new Colony Constitution came into effect at the beginning of 1959 with elections on January 4th and the new Legislative Council opened on the 26th with 12 elected members and only 5 ex officio and 6 nominated. Again, a nationalist boycott was implemented and "was partly successful" according to the 'Review of Affairs'[21]. In fact, only 27% of the electorate participated in the elections which suggests that the boycott was somewhat more than "partly successful"[22]. However, of the twelve elected, eleven were affiliated to the Aden Association, the moderate grouping that the British were keen to work with, which suggests that the boycott also worked in favour of the colonial power, in the short-term at least. However, the boycott should also have been a sufficient warning to the British in Aden that there was a serious body of opposition in existence that threatened their position and interests. Despite this, the Governor still claimed that:

> "Sufficient constitutional progress has been conceded to enable the moderates to involve themselves with the Government of Aden without being regarded as unpatriotic by the general public; and a substantial body of local opinion for the first time has an active interest in the Government of the Colony"[23].

This claim was dubious since the moderates had been elected by only a quarter of the electorate, and this was an electorate which excluded the large numbers of Protectorate and Yemeni workers resident in Aden. Therefore, whilst the British were able to claim that progress was being introduced to Aden, it was still a long way short of meeting the demands of the opposition. Furthermore, the constitutional developments that had been introduced did not threaten to dilute colonial rule and threaten the increasing value of the Colony to British interests.

---

[20] *ibid.*
[21] *ibid.*
[22] Trevaskis, Sir Kennedy - *Shades of Amber* (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1968), p. 156
[23] PRO CO 1015/1835/14 - *op. cit.*

The Rebellion in the Protectorate

British Interests in the Hinterland and the 'Forward Policy'

The transfer of Aden to the Colonial Office in 1937 had seen the start of a new, more active policy in the Protectorate surrounding the Colony. As noted in Chapter One, this 'forward policy' saw the introduction of motorised transport into the various shaikhdoms, amirates and sultanates of South Arabia, as well as the building of some roads, and new agricultural policies to increase productivity. These developments were seen as advances by the British policy-makers, and by those rulers and tribes who profited from them. However, there were also many that suffered from the loss of their traditional income. This latter group became actively opposed to the forward policy in the 1950s, taking up armed resistance and creating unrest in the Protectorate. This, though, was at the same time as the British were re-evaluating their role in the Protectorate, and its benefit to their position in Aden. The Colonial Office, therefore, were more interested in maintaining order in the hinterland than previously, which in turn meant an increased involvement to pacify the rebellious tribes.

The value of Aden was established in the Colonial Office Memorandum of September 1955 (see above), and this same document also evaluated the value and importance of the Protectorate to British interests and the British position in the Middle East[24]. This document pointed out that:

> "There is a clear obligation on H.M.G. to maintain and uphold its treaties with the protected states for as long as they themselves wish to remain in that association with H.M.G. it would not be possible unilaterally to abrogate these treaties, although it may be possible in time to evolve a different kind of relationship."[25].

The British Government also had a "general kind of obligation to assist and develop these small and weak states" towards a stronger economic and social condition "by

[24] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *op. cit.*
[25] *ibid.*

means of tactical advice and financial aid", the extent of this to be determined by "H.M.G.'s abiding policy"[26]. Therefore, even before British interests were taken into account, the Advisory Treaties had bestowed a legal and a moral obligation upon the colonial power to remain in South Arabia to defend and aid the rulers of the Protectorate.

In fact, these obligations were more binding than any interests in the Protectorate on its own. In the first place, from a strategic point of view,

> "the protected states can simply be regarded, as they have historically been regarded, as a glacis for the protection of the Colony and the essential interest might equally well be achieved either by having friendly independent states on the borders of the Colony, or by having protected states in the same relationship to H.M.G. as at present, whether or not closer association or federation were achieved."[27].

The memorandum also pointed out, however, that if the neighbouring states were the hostile Yemeni and/or Saudi Arabian Kingdoms which had swallowed up the states, then the Colony would be threatened. Secondly, diplomatically, if self-government were granted to the protected states, then "a powerful propaganda weapon" would be removed from "the Arab League and other anti-colonial powers", but again there was the danger of the states "being swallowed up" by the Yemen and/or Saudi Arabia. Finally, the only possible economic benefit from the Protectorate would have been if oil was discovered, otherwise "H.M.G. has no economic or financial interest in the Protectorates if they are considered by themselves in complete isolation from the Colony"[28]. In fact, according to the Colonial Office, "a considerable sum annually in grant in aid" was being paid to the Protectorate rather than any benefit received, although only £1.4 million was spent on development between 1946 and 1960 according to Halliday[29]. The economic relationship between Aden and the Protectorate was significant as Aden was the only port of importance in South West Arabia, but unless oil was discovered, there was no real economic benefit to be accrued.

---

[26] *ibid.*
[27] *ibid.*
[28] *ibid.*
[29] Halliday, Fred - *op. cit.*, p. 174

Overall, therefore:

> "The conclusion to be drawn from these three considerations [strategic, diplomatic and economic] taken together is that on the whole the obligations of H.M.G. in the Protectorates are of greater weight than H.M.G.'s interests, except to the important extent that continued influence in the Protectorates is necessary for the military and economic security of the Colony. If it were possible to discount the protection of our interests in the Colony, a policy of disengagement from the Protectorates might be considered, but even then only on condition that they were not thereby delivered up to the Yemen or Saudi Arabia"[30].

This showed that, whilst Aden was becoming of increasing value to British interests, the Protectorate remained only of interest as a barrier to defend the Colony. However, there had been threats to the Protectorate's role as a defensive barrier before, and the Imam of Yemen continued to lay claim to sovereignty over the area in the 1950s, which meant that, like all defensive shields, the hinterland needed strengthening at times. To achieve this, the 'forward' policy had been introduce by the Colonial Office, but this had further endangered the British position in South West Arabia by interfering with the traditional social structures and economy, thereby creating disaffected tribal groupings who were in a position to create serious difficulties for British interests.

To the colonial officials working in the Protectorate, however, the problem was not British interference, but lack of funds or Yemeni subversion or the ineffectiveness of the rulers themselves (or a combination of these factors). Sir Tom Hickinbotham (Governor of Aden) wrote to J.E. Marnham of the Colonial Office in 1954 declaring his support for an active policy in the hinterland:

> "The Treasury would like to know where we are going in the Protectorate. I would say that we shall be going through a door marked 'Exit' unless we can apply a forward and vigorous policy of development in the Protectorate"[31].

---

[30] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *op. cit.*
[31] PRO CO 1015/1211/4 - *Letter from Hickinbotham to J.E. Marnham*, 7 Aug. 1954

Moreover, he believed that if the British did not "give" the Arabs in the Protectorate progress then they would accept it from Egypt or another Arab state. This may have been true, but if progress involved loss of income for the tribes, then it was hardly surprising that there was opposition to British involvement. According to Sir Kennedy Trevaskis, who served in Aden and the Protectorate for thirteen years, the problem was not so much the lack of funds supplied by the British Government, although he does criticise this, but the misrule of certain rulers, and the interference of the Imam in the hinterland. In response to a friend asking exactly what the state governments did, Trevaskis replied that, "They tax the weak, buy off the strong and keep what is left over for themselves", which he admitted was an exaggeration, but "not so very far from the truth"[32]. The "rub" of the problem was not too much British interference in Trevaskis' opinion, but not enough:

> "Everywhere the need for reform stared one in the face. We needed to improve the competence and quality of the state governments by the textbook procedures of inspection, supervision and instruction and we needed honest-to-goodness district officers familiar with them. But this was not a colony, we were advisers and had no district officers"[33].

Whilst making the Protectorate into a colony might possibly have meant more development and improved education, health and social conditions, it would also have laid Britain open to accusations it was busy trying to deny, namely imperialism and colonialism. Furthermore, it was unlikely that the Treasury would have agreed to the increased expenditure necessary for the conversion. Finally, there was no guarantee that it would have removed the grievances that existed among the discontented tribesmen in the Protectorate.

The Troubles

In the minds of many of the British civilian and military officials in Aden and the Protectorate, the outbreak of resistance they faced in various parts of the hinterland was

[32] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 31
[33] *ibid.*, p. 31

largely due to Yemeni interference and subversion, inciting disaffected tribes to revolt against their rulers:

> "The Governor of Aden and the Commanders-in-Chief, Middle East, consider that the primary requirements for the improvement of the internal security of the Aden Protectorate is the effective curbing of Yemeni interference and that an examination should be made of means of inducing a change in that country's policy"[34].

The Colonial Office supported this view, but the Foreign Office was disturbed at reports suggesting the intelligence system in the Colony was inadequate and the Security Forces were not being used effectively, pointing out that "we must look very closely at our own arrangements before we assume that the trouble is primarily due to the Yemen"[35]. The inadequacy of the Security Forces and intelligence system was an opinion endorsed by the Colonial Office and the Governor, and highlighted by the Chiefs of Staff who pointed out the low morale among the Aden Protectorate Levies. However, in their same report, the Chiefs of Staff stressed the problem was not solely a military one:

> "We further conclude that settled conditions cannot be restored in the Protectorate by military means alone. We would therefore stress the urgency for taking the necessary non-military measures for giving the tribesmen of the Protectorate a vested interest in living peaceably and for inducing the Yemeni (sic) to cease their subversive activities"[36].

This conclusion is important as it highlighted that there were different reasons for the troubles in the Protectorate in the 1950s. The factors involved were political (Yemeni interference), military (the weaknesses of the Protectorate Security Forces), and socio-economic (the effect of the 'forward policy'). It is the latter which was probably the prime factor in instigating the rebellion.

---

[34] PRO DEFE 11/309/125A - *Security in the Aden Protectorate - Long Term Measures*, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff, 5 Aug. 1955
[35] PRO DEFE 11/309/121A - *Letter Foreign Secretary to Secretary of State for Defence*, 29 July 1955
[36] PRO DEFE 11/309/125A - *op. cit.*

Kennedy Trevaskis, no sympathiser of the Yemeni Imam, did not believe that the dissident tribes were fighting for the cause of Yemeni unity:

> "if the Imam was feeding, paying and arming the rebels, not a single shot had been fired by any of them for union with the Yemen. The old Shafi'i prejudices against Zeidi rule were still unshaken. At one time [Qadi Muhammed Abdulla] Asshami (the Imam's special adviser on the Protectorate) had tried to persuade his clients to sign declarations of allegiance to the Imam, but he had failed and he no longer even made a pretence that they were fighting under Yemeni banners. They were fighting, he would say, for freedom. Freedom from what? I would ask. 'Freedom from your colonialism', would be the invariable reply"[37].

He also admitted that there was no consensus among the British working in the region: the Aden Secretariat believed the 'rebellion' was a symptom of bad and unpopular government whilst the Political Officers were of the opinion that the cause was penury and tribal opportunism. Trevaskis believed that underlying all the problems was discontent, although not with the state governments, since the two most oligarchic and unreformed were in Audhali and Beihan, the only two states which had resisted 'Yemeni subversion' successfully. Instead, Trevaskis came to the opinion that the 'Advisory Treaties' had weakened the Dolas by "well-intentioned interference"[38]. This in turn had weakened the bonds between tribesmen and their leaders, and the tribal leaders and their rulers, since the Sultans and Amirs could not maintain the balance between rival tribes if the Imam was funding and supplying one tribe whilst the other received nothing because the British refused to disburse arms. Trevaskis defined the problem as 'tribalism', the tribes being divided by suspicion and blood, so much so that democratic institutions would not work as one side would not sit on a body that included their rivals.

This view is an accurate look at traditional society in South West Arabia in the 1950s, but it also admits the mistakes that were made by the British in their rush to introduce Western democracy to a tribal structure. The introduction of roads, motorised transport and British Advisers had destabilised the structure of society and left some tribal groups without any form of income. This had created a number of dispossessed tribesmen who

---

[37] Trevaskis - *op. cit.* p. 79
[38] *ibid.*, p. 88

were resentful at the loss of their livelihood and rebelled against their rulers who were supposed to protect them. These 'rebels' according to the British were being supplied and supported by the Imam, and there is no doubt that arms did cross the border - Qadi Asshami admitted as much to Trevaskis (see above). However, as Trevaskis also admitted, the Imam had no more control over these groups than the British did:

> "The Imam had no difficulty in manufacturing revolts, but, as we had seen, he had so far been unable to claim a single rebel as a subject. As a patron of revolts he had been acceptable, but not as a master"[39].

Anglo-Yemeni relations had steadily worsened since the Imam Ahmad had come to the throne after his father's assassination in 1948. Sir Tom Hickinbotham blamed Ahmad for the worsening situation in the Protectorate, claiming the Imam feared the forward policy as the advanced well-being of the Protectorate would make it more difficult to impose his will in the area at a future date, and also that his own subjects would react to the contrast in conditions between Yemen and the Protectorate[40]. For these reasons, frontier raids were conducted, assassins hired and formal protests made to the British diplomatic representative at Taiz claiming that the forward policy was a breach of the status quo established by the 1934 Treaty. The Exchange of Notes between the United Kingdom and Yemen in 1951 failed to settle any differences as the Imam still claimed sovereignty over the Protectorate and the British still felt there was Yemeni support for the rebel tribes. A statement from the Yemeni Charge d'Affaires in Washington (13 August 1954) gave the Imam's point of view:

> "The Yemeni Government considers the Advisory Treaties as well as the proposed Federation scheme a serious violation of the Treaty of Sanaa of 1934 which provided in Article III for the strict maintenance of status quo on the southern and western extremities of the Yemen"[41].

Moreover, the Protectorate Treaties were likened to slavery which was forced on Yemeni "cantons", a view disputed by the British. The two sides were effectively

---

[39] *ibid.*, p. 88
[40] Hickinbotham, Sir Tom - *Aden* (Constable & Co., London, 1958)
[41] *Records of Yemen*, eds. Doreen and Leila Ingrams (Anthony Rowe Ltd., Chippenham, 1993), pp. 357-62

incapable of agreement over the question of Imamic sovereignty in the Protectorate and British policy.

Whilst it is true that there was Imamic support for the dissidents in the Protectorate, this was not the sole reason for the situation. Trevaskis admitted that the Advisory Treaties and British 'forward policy' in the Protectorate had to take some responsibility because of the effect they had had on the traditional tribal structure. The two main dissident groups carrying out attacks in the Protectorate in the 1950s were the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid and Muhammad Aidrus, and both felt they had suffered from reforms to the tribal system. The former were a notable family and felt they had been excluded from powerful positions in the Upper 'Aulaqi Sheikhdom and revolted against the state's leaders, largely due to Trevaskis's interference:

> "It (the family's disaffection) arose out of my (Trevaskis) insistence ... that some of them should be removed from the Upper Aulaqi Sheikhdom's 'civil list' and that others should be deprived of sinecures. The Sheikh's sons, who were administering the state, protested that they were 'important'. I dismissed their protests and delivered a textbook lecture about their need to cultivate a proper sense of responsibility. I won the argument, but, unwittingly, provoked a tribal revolt"[42].

Trevaskis later realised the damage he had caused in his "clumsy pursuit of better government", but this did little to appease the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid who remained in opposition to the British and the Protectorate rulers until the end of colonial ruler in 1967. However, the Ahl Abu Bakr's peak was in the 1950s when, with tribesmen from Dathina and Abyan they attacked the new agricultural projects in the Protectorate[43]. These projects were the same targets for Muhammad Aidrus, Naib of Lower Yafi'i, who recruited dissident tribesmen from Dali, Fadhli, and Lower Yafi'i to his cause. He demanded greater participation of local entrepreneurs in the Abyan Cotton Board, the landowners and peasants who worked in the co-operative project should receive a larger share of the profits, and British control of the project should be reduced. These claims might have been a reflection of his personal desire for greater wealth, but they also

---

[42] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 86
[43] Kostiner, Joseph - *The Struggle for South Yemen* (Croom Helm, London, 1984), p. 27

showed the growing ambition of men like the Naib, who believed they were being deprived by the forward policy and wanted a greater say in the running of the Protectorate.

Whatever the reasons behind Muhammad Aidrus's revolt, he proved to be a major problem for both the British and the rulers of the Protectorate. From his base in al-Qarah (in the mountains close to the border with the Yemen), he attacked convoys and military and economic installations in the Protectorate. Probably his most embarrassing success from the British point of view was when he managed to take the contents of the Lower Yafi'i state treasury, the Tribal Guards and almost every official in the administration with him back to his stronghold[44]. Aidrus was also very popular with the people of Lower Yafi'i, which meant that the British had to move carefully so as not to set off an even more widespread rebellion in the Protectorate. Muhammad Aidrus, like the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid, remained an active opponent of the British and their policy in the Protectorate right up to 1967. He also remained influential and was invited to join the National Liberation Front when it was formed in 1963, although he declined. In fact, as Kostiner has pointed out these were not only tribal revolts, the activities of both groups were important for the political organisations as well,:

> "Both Ibn al-'Aydarus' uprising and the ... Ahl Abu Bakr revolt contributed to the emergence of an opposition which cut across the boundaries of the previously rigid stratification; notables, administrators, teachers and landowners, in co-operation with tribesmen, against the leading establishment in the Protectorate"[45].

These two groups of dissidents were the most notable, largely for their success, but they were not the only opposition to Britain and the Protectorate rulers. Other groups, such as the Rabizi tribe and the Dammanis were also causing the security forces great problems, in some cases the Government Guards were effectively prisoners under siege in their forts. However, it has to be stressed that there was no overall command of the dissidents, rather it was several separate, and quite distinct, tribal groups that rebelled

---

[44] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 124, also *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 13, 1957-1958*, pp. 329-30, Luce's telegram to Secretary of State for Colonies stated that Aidrus left Abyan with over £10,000, over 170 Tribal Guards and several state officials

[45] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 28

against either their local ruler or the British or a combination of the two. Despite this, the rebellion in the Protectorate took its toll on both the security forces and the forward policy as a whole, and it became increasingly clear that a change of direction was needed from the British if they were to contain the dissidents and help their allies and dependants, the various Sultans, Amirs and Naibs of the Protectorate states.

The British Response

One of the reasons for the efficacy of the Protectorate dissidents was the poor performance of the security forces, the APL and the Government Guards. Moreover, this got worse as the 'rebels' gained in confidence and achieved successes which highlighted the need for reform of these forces. There were actually three different forces in the Protectorate, the APL, the Government Guards and the Tribal Guards, each with different roles and areas of responsibility. The Tribal Guards were for internal security within each state and were the rulers' own security force. The Government Guards were for manning key position on the frontier and for dealing with breaches of security the Tribal Guards could not handle. Finally, the APL were responsible for patrols in the hinterland and to give military backing where necessary to the Government Guards[46]. However, by the mid-1950s, none of the three were particularly efficient at maintaining security within the Protectorate, and there were serious problems with low morale.

The Foreign Office, as shown above, believed that the inadequacy of the intelligence system and security forces were potentially part of the problem in the Protectorate and that the British should not be so quick to blame the Yemen for all the troubles. The ambush of an APL convoy in Wadi Hatib in 1954 by the Rabizi tribe resulted in huge casualties for the Levies and an already low morale plummeted further[47]. This incident highlighted that the Foreign Office view certainly had some truth to it, especially after

[46] PRO CO 1015/1302/10 - *Strength and Deployment of Aden Protectorate Levies and Government Guards*, 1 Feb. 1957
[47] Lunt, James - *Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the Twentieth Century* (Macdonald, London, 1981), p. 141

the garrison at Robat had to be evacuated in July 1955 in the face of further Rabizi attacks, as well as mass desertions in both the APL and the Government Guards[48]. The need for reform was clear, and so Sir Lawrence Sinclair, Commander British Forces, decided to withdraw all Levies to Aden for training and re-fitting and left the Government Guards in forts with landing strips to be supplied by air transport as there was to be no road movement by troops[49].

Initially disengagement was treated with dismay by the rulers, and jubilation by the dissidents. There were more determined attacks on Government Guard forts, and unfamiliarity with the new system meant communications between the forts and APL headquarters were poor. However, order was gradually restored as the dissident tribes grew tired of attacking uncapturable forts, and there were no convoys to ambush. The resultant lack of success against the British and the security forces saw the cessation of Yemeni supplies to the 'rebel' tribes. The APL was also successfully reformed under the War Office and by the late 1950s was efficiently imposing more peaceful conditions in the Protectorate in tandem with the RAF. This is not to say that all trouble ended, but conditions did improve and the British slowly regained the initiative in the Protectorate, albeit only for a few years until the NLF appeared on the scene. Even so, it was not until late 1960 that Muhammad Aidrus was bombed out of his stronghold and his political supporters detained[50]. Furthermore, the Imam continued to supply large quantities of rifles and ammunition to dissident tribes[51]. Luce believed that by January 1957 the Imam had been taught "a sufficiently firm lesson" which had stabilised the frontier over the previous six months since the latest bout of disturbances had erupted[52]. However, the danger of political subversion was still very real, and the Governor believed that:

---

[48] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 71
[49] *ibid.*, pp. 71-2
[50] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 28
[51] PRO CO 1015/1836/1 - *Letter from Luce to Lord Lloyd*, 19 Jan. 1957 - Luce estimated 1,700 rifles had been issued by the Yemen in the three months to the end of November 1956
[52] *ibid.*, it was with some satisfaction that Luce reported "I can't help feeling that the loudness of the Yemeni squealing to the outside world is some measure of the effectiveness of the lesson"

> "Our best, and indeed only, hope of retaining the allegiance and co-operation of such Rulers in the face of external pressures lies in the development of their States and the giving of tangible proof of the value of the British connection"[53].

Thus, Luce was repeating the warnings of the Chiefs of Staff in their 1955 report on security in the Protectorate, that settled conditions could not be restored by military means alone. It is difficult to establish the extent to which these warnings were actually heeded, especially with Treasury opposition to increased expenditure. Military means had restored a large degree of stability to the Protectorate in the short-term, but there had still been a lot of damage caused by the rebellion and the British response. Any progress that had been achieved in the early 1950s was ruined by the events of the mid-1950s with trade at a standstill, the states' revenues had dwindled, and control had been lost over large parts of the country[54]. Moreover, the events of the mid-1950s had ruined British credibility in the eyes of many; their initial inability to contain the situation had shown that British control over the Protectorate was far from absolute. Disengagement had worked in the short term, but a long-term solution was required to ensure a repeat of the Protectorate rebellion did not occur, and some British officials believed the answer lay in creating a Federation in the hinterland.

The Creation of the Federation

Hickinbotham's Proposal

The Federation of the Arab Amirates of the South was inaugurated on 11 February 1959 but was actually first suggested in 1952 by the then Governor of Aden, Tom Hickinbotham, to the Colonial Office[55]. The gap of seven years was due to a combination of reluctance on the part of the rulers to relinquish any of their powers, and cold feet by the British who, with the exception of Hickinbotham, did not want to

---

[53] *ibid.*
[54] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, pp. 77-8
[55] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *op. cit.*

pressurise the rulers into the project. The Federal scheme ultimately found favour with both the rulers and the British, but was opposed by certain groups within the Protectorate and also by the Imam who saw it as yet another transgression of the 1934 Treaty of Sana.

Hickinbotham initially proposed to the rulers in January 1954 two federations, one in the Eastern Aden Protectorate (EAP), the other in the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP) which was less well developed administratively. The Governor would have been head of both organisations, with a Council of Rulers, Executive and Legislative Councils of nominated members (elected members at a later date) in both federations, which would only have been responsible for customs, communications, education and public health[56]. The rulers accepted this scheme in principle and progress was made but the hostile reaction from Yemen and Egypt (and the accompanying propaganda) scared the rulers who started hesitating over the proposals[57]. British Government officials were also uncertain about the benefits of a federation:

> "Mr Gorell-Barnes (Colonial Office) replied that, in his personal opinion, the federation scheme did not look like coming to anything. The Rulers concerned had been affected by anti-federation propaganda from Cairo and elsewhere, and were showing reluctance to enter into the scheme"[58].

According to Hickinbotham, pressure should have been exerted on the weaker rulers to coerce them into accepting federation, but instead the Colonial Office pulled back to avoid the allegations of force and left it to the rulers to initiate the scheme[59]. However, this does not give the full story, and there were other factors involved, not least the rivalry that existed among certain rulers, and the fact that policy-makers in London were unsure of the best direction to take in Aden and the Protectorate until regional policy had been determined.

---

[56] Hickinbotham - *op. cit.*, pp. 165-6
[57] *ibid.*, p. 169
[58] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 11, 1950-1954*, pp. 506-7 - Record of Meeting between Foreign Office and Colonial Office officials, 19 Aug. 1954
[59] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 89

The main differences in British policy-making over the idea of federation was between the Colonial Office and the Foreign Office. The Colonial Office memorandum to the Chiefs of Staff on the British Government's long range policy assessed the value of both the Colony and the Protectorate to British interests and concluded that Aden had strategic value whilst the Protectorate's main value was as a defensive barrier[60]. The question that had to be asked was, was federation the best way of maintaining British interests in Aden and ensuring the Colony was protected by the hinterland? The Colonial Office memorandum pointed out that there were sufficient doubts about federation to withhold pressure on the rulers to agree to a union, although the prospect of oil being discovered might change the circumstances. The Colonial Office believed that the states should be induced to sign a precautionary agreement - to divide the spoils if oil were discovered - which in itself was a closer form of association both between the states, and between all the states together and the British Government than had previously existed. In addition, there was the Government's stated aim regarding all dependent territories, that they should be brought "to responsible self-government if and as soon as that can be safely achieved, having regard to the economic and social condition of each territory"[61]. It was not realistic to assume that the states could achieve this independent of each other, and so policy should be in favour of gradual achievement of Federation, bringing the rulers voluntarily into association with each other. However, the memorandum also stated that "it is not also necessary to assume that any time must come when those federated Protectorates would need in turn to be federated with the Colony"[62]. This highlighted that not only did British interests come first, but that in reality the policy-makers in London were unsure how to best defend them. Moreover, the memorandum was also an example of British uncertainty about relinquishing any control over the Colony, an issue which would be much debated until the final decision to withdraw was taken in 1966.

The Foreign Office at the time were more certain of how to best defend British interests, and this preferably did not involve federation. Harold Macmillan, then

---

[60] PRO CO 1015/1212/30 - *op. cit.*
[61] *ibid.*
[62] *ibid.*

Foreign Secretary, wrote to Alan Lennox Boyd (Colonial Secretary) expressing his doubts about federation and the aim of eventual independence for Aden and the Protectorate, since "it is surely an essential interest to hold on to it (i.e. Aden) as long as we possibly can and not to encourage any development which will speed up a demand for independence"[63]. Moreover, not only should the British Government not encourage federation, but in fact the exact opposite should be British policy, the rulers should be left "in a state of simple rivalry and separateness" so that they could be played off against each other and remain dependent on Britain[64]. The Joint Planning Staff were also dubious about federation since, according to them, discussions would prolong the requirement for additional British forces in Aden[65]. However, it could have been just as easily argued that this was necessary anyway, given the unsettled state of affairs in the Protectorate at the time. Lennox Boyd responded to these doubts with the argument that the barrage of criticism the rulers were facing from the opposition meant they might succumb individually to Yemeni or Saudi influence unless they were united[66]. It was this argument that ultimately won the day, and the Governor was authorised to open discussions with the rulers again, although the 'softly, softly' approach was to be continued[67].

The Rulers were therefore sent a communication on 31st March 1956 informing them that, after a review of policy,

> "It is therefore the view of Her Majesty's Government that it would be in your best interests to seek some form of closer association between yourselves for mutual assistance and support, in order to strengthen your internal economy and social organisation with a view to your further economic and political development"[68].

The communication's language was, presumably intentionally, vague, allowing the Rulers to negotiate among themselves, and reassuring them of continued protection

---

[63] PRO CO 1015/1212/35 - *Macmillan to Lennox Boyd*, 14 Oct. 1955
[64] *ibid.*
[65] PRO CO 1015/1212/31&/33 - *JPS Report*, 5 Oct. 1955
[66] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960 Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 226-7, Lennox Boyd to Macmillan, 1 Nov. 1955
[67] *ibid.*, p. 237, Cabinet Office Meeting, 13 Mar. 1956
[68] PRO CO 1015/1131/3 - *Appendix I to Despatch No. 875 of 19th June 1956*

from the British Government. The Rulers replied, with an equally vague communication, that they believed "that the development and progress of our countries in the future depends on close association and co-operation between them", and promised that they would have discussions to consider this and reach "a more acceptable organisation" [69].

Hickinbotham was disappointed at the lack of pressure the British Government was willing to exert on the Rulers, and criticised British policy in a long letter to the Colonial Secretary[70]. He believed that to control political development, improve the economy, advance education "of the right type", and weld together the component states of the Protectorate with as little disturbance as possible, the Federation plan was the best solution. The decision in 1954 not to interfere in the internal politics of the Protectorate was taken to avoid arousing the opposition of "the less understanding and more backward of the rulers"[71]. The federation plan at that time was capable of adjustment and could have been made more palatable to the rulers if necessary, indeed negotiations continued through 1954 even whilst the rebellion in the hinterland was at its heaviest. However, the British decision to avoid pressuring the rulers into federation was a serious setback which Hickinbotham criticised:

> "More is the pity that no pressure was brought to bear for if it had been the whole affair would have been concluded successfully within a few weeks and we should certainly be much better off than in fact we are"[72].

The rulers also protested at the decision since it meant they were suffering from Yemeni propaganda attacks for no good reason, but Hickinbotham, "ever obedient", followed orders. In fact, the Governor's criticisms here were watered down by Lord Lloyd before he circulated the despatch so that the criticism was much milder[73]. The present policy of giving the rulers mild encouragement to form a federation by themselves also comes in for criticism from Hickinbotham, however, as he did not believe that any of the rulers

---

[69] PRO CO 1015/1131/3 - *Appendix II to Despatch No. 875 of 19th June 1956*
[70] PRO CO 1015/1131/3 - *Despatch from Governor to Lennox Boyd*, 19 June 1956
[71] *ibid.*
[72] *ibid.*
[73] PRO CO 1015/1131/5 - *Lloyd to Hickinbotham*, 16 July 1956

were capable of introducing a workable scheme for even partial federation. The only exception to this was the Sultan of Lahej who "unfortunately ... has very nationalistic and advanced ideas" and his "anti-British policy must be condemned and that roundly"[74]. Hickinbotham was of the opinion that it was up to the British to give the lead, and so considered setting up a small committee of rulers under his chairmanship to consider how best to make federation a reality, an idea that Lloyd opposed as he did not want the initiative to come from a representative of Her Majesty's Government[75].

Luce's Policy

Hickinbotham's criticisms and proposals ultimately came to nothing as he was replaced as Governor of Aden by Sir William Luce in September 1956. The new Governor had his own ideas about future policy in Aden and the Protectorate, and he was not of the opinion that federation suited the best interests of the British Government. Therefore, in December 1956 he informed the Colonial Office that he was stopping the federation and oil agreements:

> "they were in the best interests of the people of the Protectorate ... But, as I see it, the requirements of Her Majesty's Government's policy for the Colony must come first and insofar as there is disharmony between them and administrative consideration in the Protectorate, the latter must give way"[76].

Luce expanded on his views on the British Government's policy in a letter to the Colonial Secretary. He based his conclusions "on the assumption that British policy is primarily concerned with our interests in Aden Colony ... and that the importance of the Protectorate to Her majesty's Government lies chiefly in its relationship to the Colony"[77]. In Aden itself, the problem was to keep the politically conscious class happy with political and constitutional developments, but not go so far as to prejudice the British Government's policy - in other words "play for time by performing a tight-

---

[74] PRO CO 1015/1131/3 - *op. cit.*
[75] PRO CO 1015/1131/6 - *Lloyd to Hickinbotham*, July 1956
[76] PRO CO 1015/1132/7 - *Letter from Luce to Sir John Macpherson (Colonial Office)*, 11 Dec. 1956
[77] PRO CO 1015/1213/160 - *Despatch from Luce to Lennox Boyd*, 11 Dec. 1956

rope act"[78]. As regards the Protectorate, Luce did not believe that Federation was a policy which would avoid conflicting with British needs and interests. Firstly, there had been no real support for the scheme from among the Rulers, in fact the plan had run into difficulties due to "the feuds, jealousies and suspicions which are typical of most Arabs" (a disparaging view common among many of the Government's representatives in South Arabia), let alone been eagerly accepted[79]. More importantly, according to the Governor, federation would result in an early call for the abolition of the protectorate and advisory treaties which would limit British actions:

> "the demand for independence of the Protectorate which I believe would follow federation would greatly stimulate nationalist feeling in the Colony and the desire to join Colony and Protectorate together in one independent State. The difficulties of retaining control of the Colony would thereby be greatly increased."[80]

For these reasons, Luce opposed the implementation of the federation proposal, although he admitted that, since the idea was in circulation, the British Government could not kill it off openly without encouraging the Yemen to champion the idea and win over "the more progressively minded Protectorate Arabs". He suggested instead that Britain should not say or do anything to either promote or kill off the scheme. Moreover, the oil agreements, which would be the surest way making a federation reality, should also be abandoned. Luce's alternative was to convince the States of the advantage of the British connection through a policy of economic and social development of the Protectorate. He warned that this would require "considerably greater funds" than had previously been expended, but,

> "If Her Majesty's Government are not prepared to pay for the retention of their influence, they will in my opinion assuredly lose it and with its loss their policy for Aden Colony will be gravely jeopardised"[81].

The Governor believed that, whilst economic and social development might well strengthen the educated opposition and encourage the move towards independence, this

---

[78] *ibid.*
[79] *ibid.*
[80] *ibid.*
[81] *ibid.*

risk already existed and a policy of encouraging progress might reconcile the moderate elements to the British connection.

Luce's proposals were not seriously considered by the British Government for another year when future policy in the Colony and Protectorate were again being discussed. A Colonial Office memorandum for the Cabinet Committee on the Middle East suggested three possible policy options for the Protectorate: present policy; federation; Luce's proposal[82]. The policy being followed at the time involved fending off Yemeni or Saudi aggression and subversion whilst maintaining minimum control with minimum development, but this was negative and did little to satisfy the aspirations of the more educated classes or bind the rulers and their subjects to the British connection. British Ministers were against taking the initiative over federation and the rulers' "traditional separatism" meant little progress had been made. After the memorandum rejected these two options it recommended that the Colonial Office supported Luce's proposal regarding the development of the Protectorate. The suggested increased expenditure of additional £1.75m. per annum was the problem as it was unlikely to yield an economic return. Furthermore, the Cabinet had endorsed the view that very careful consideration was necessary for any increased commitments in overseas expenditure[83]. However, since Great Britain needed to retain the Colony, and control over the Protectorate was important to this, then,

> "the proposed additional expenditure in the Protectorate can be compared with the recent decision to allocate £1m. annually to economic support of the Baghdad Pact, and the whole proposal should be considered as a series of measures designed to strengthen the United Kingdom position in southern Arabia and therefore in the Middle East"[84].

---

[82] PRO CO 1015/2067/39 - *Cabinet, Official Committee on the Middle East, Aden Protectorate Policy*, Memorandum by the Colonial Office, 20 Dec. 1957

[83] The grant-in-aid to the Protectorate in 1957/58 was £1.4m. plus £1.56m. for the APL and £1.07m. C.D. & W. allocations for agriculture, irrigation, roads and so forth, Luce had proposed £2.8m. on top of this spread over five years, plus £0.8m. per annum - PRO CO 1015/2067/39 - *op. cit.*

[84] *ibid.*

The proposals met opposition from the Treasury who claimed they needed to economise[85]. However, there was support from the Foreign Office since "expenditure of this kind was necessary if we were to maintain our position in Arabia and the Persian Gulf"[86]. Ultimately, Ministers agreed to an enhanced programme of development involving "some expansion in the general scale of our economic aid", but not until 1959/60 due to the economic situation in the UK[87]. However, at about this time, the rulers were changing their minds about federation and beginning to see the benefits of forming some kind of union, a development which involved further revisions of British policy towards Aden and the Protectorate.

The Rulers Agree to Federation

Early in 1958 the Governor of Aden informed London that some of the Protectorate rulers were proposing a Federation of their states[88]. The reason for the change of mind, according to Luce, was "their desire to strengthen themselves against the Yemen and to offer their people a more secure and prosperous future"[89]. The renewed threat from the Yemen, in particular the formation of the United Arab States in January 1958 which allied the Imam with Nasser's Egyptian-Syrian United Arab Republic, seemed to be the main reason for the Rulers' renewed interest in federation. According to Trevaskis the initiative to move towards a federation came from Sharif Hussein of Beihan, Sultan Saleh of Audhali, and Sultan Ahmed of Fadhli, with support from the Upper Aulaqi Shaikhdom, Dhala and Lower Yafi'i[90]. However, the initiative took the British by surprise.

---

[85] PRO CO 1015/2066/38 - *Roger Makins (Treasury) to Sir Hilton Poynton (Colonial Office)*, 16 Dec. 1957
[86] PRO CO 1015/2067/44 - *Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies*, Jan. 1958
[87] PRO CO 1015/2067/48 - *Letter from Morgan (CO) to Luce*, 5 Feb. 1958
[88] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 13, 1957-1958*, pp. 584-9, Letter from Luce to Gorell Barnes (CO), 28 Mar 1958
[89] PRO CO 1015/1835/13 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Protectorate*, Governor of Aden to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 19 March 1959
[90] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 129

The Rulers had been alarmed, not only by the closer ties between the Yemen and Egypt, but also at the renewed outbreak of disturbances in the Protectorate during 1958, which this time was backed up by Yemeni troops[91]. However, unlike the troubles of 1954, on this occasion the APL and the Government Guards were better able to defend the Protectorate against the dissident tribes, although they had more difficulties against the better armed Yemeni troops on the frontier. The firm stand by the British, though, resulted in the rulers having increased confidence in the British Government, particularly after Luce withdrew recognition of Sultan Ali of Lahej who had been causing problems for the colonial government (see below). This confidence in the British, boosted by the reassurance of Duncan Sandys, and the Labour MP Austen Albu, that the rulers would not be abandoned helped convince the Protectorate rulers to ally themselves with the British Government, and also with each other in the face of the Yemeni/Egyptian threat[92]. The result was that discussions to form a federation took place in London in June 1958, and then back in Aden for the last quarter of the year to reach agreement on the form that the Federation would take[93].

The discussions were long, and at times difficult, and the inauguration ceremony did not take place until 11th February 1959 when the six states who had first expressed interest established the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South. The British Government had agreed on 16th July 1958 to the principle of federation and that there should be a treaty between the British Government and the Federation. However, the form of the new Federal constitution proved a difficult problem to overcome, largely because, in Luce's opinion, "Some of the Rulers are highly temperamental characters and the shaping of the constitution had to take account of deep-seated suspicions and jealousies between them"[94]. In the end the constitution provided for a Council of Ministers with general executive authority and a rotating chairmanship, and a Federal Council as the legislative authority with six nominated members from each state. The plan for a President "proved impossible owing to mutual distrust and suspicion between

---

[91] *ibid.*, pp. 129-130
[92] *ibid.*, p. 133
[93] PRO CO 1015/1835/13 - *op. cit.*
[94] *ibid.*

some of the Rulers"[95]. The Treaty between the British Government and the Federation gave Britain the responsibility for external affairs and the obligation of defence as well as the right to give advice (which the Federation was obliged to accept). Financial and technical assistance was to be provided and a Federal Army and Federal National Guard (to replace the APL and Government Guards respectively) were to be established, although British forces could also move at will and carry out operations. Despite its weaknesses, Luce was reasonably hopeful about the future of the Federation, but warned:

> "The future of the Federation and the faith of its members in our good intentions will depend greatly on the firmness of our support in the face of the Yemen's provocative and active hostility"[96].

This is important because Luce's warning turned out to be fairly prophetic, as the reluctance of the British Government to fight back against Yemeni subversion and hostility in the 1960s was one of the main complaints from the Federation and seriously undermined it as an effective institution. Trevaskis also warned of the weaknesses in the Federal structure since the only element of stability to base the Federal government on was the tribes qualified acceptance of their ruling councils' leadership:

> "With bullets in their cartridge belts they had the most effective means of influencing their rulers and, so long as tribalism persists and they have guns in their hands, they are unlikely to be converted to unintelligible principles of the ballot box and the majority vote"[97]

However, this pessimism did not stop other states from allying themselves to the new creation, and by 1962, six more states had joined so that almost the entire Western Aden Protectorate was federated, the main exception being the Colony of Aden, and its exclusion was to prove a very controversial issue which divided British policy-makers.

Luce stated that he "naturally welcomed" the rulers' approach in 1958, although given his opposition to federation and his alternative proposals for future policy in South

---

[95] *ibid.*
[96] *ibid.*
[97] Trevaskis - *op. cit.*, p. 145

Arabia, this was probably diplomacy rather than actual pleasure[98]. However, British policy since 1956 had been that, if the Protectorate rulers wanted to form a federation, then they should be encouraged. This meant that there was no real option to supporting the initiative other than destroying the new confidence the rulers had in the British Government. According to Trevaskis, though, there were many within British policy-making circles who were unhappy about the development. The majority of the Conservative Party were unhappy about the Federation as it would want to absorb Aden and move towards independence, the Foreign Office were sensitive to the reaction from the Yemen and Egypt, the Colonial Office were unsure about the wisdom of federations after their bad experience with the Central African Federation, and the Treasury were loathe to increase Government expenditure. However, despite these objections, the discussions did go ahead, and meant that British policy had to be revised in light of the new organisation, not just in the Protectorate, but also in the Colony.

Luce's Proposals for Future Policy in Aden

The problem now facing the British was how to best maintain their control over Aden which had maintained its importance as a military base for overseas policy, in particular the 'East of Suez' policy which had become the focus of the British Government's defence and foreign policy (see above, Chapter 2). However, whilst Aden was increasing in importance, British power had greatly waned in the rest of the Middle East, especially after the Suez debacle in 1956, and the Government was finding it more and more difficult to maintain its influence in the face of the growing threat of Arab nationalism. Luce summarised the most likely future for Aden and the British position in two letters to Gorell Barnes of the Colonial Office (March 1958) in which he estimated that the "considerable degree of internal self-government" promised to the Adenis by Lord Lloyd would be achieved by the beginning of 1963. Moreover, he was realistically pessimistic about the length of time the British Government could hold onto the Colony. After the advance had been secured,

[98] PRO CO 1015/1835/13 - *op. cit.*

> "it might be possible to hold the position for a further three or four years, but in the face of a growing demand for full self-government and self-determination. To retain control of the Colony after 1967 will in my view involve a head-on collision with Adeni Arabs, their physical repression and probably a constitutional breakdown. It is quite possible that such a situation will arise before 1967 if the local situation is subjected to strong external influences and if the Colony Arabs see no prospect but an indefinite continuation of British control"[99].

He believed that the British were faced by four "currents" in world affairs: the move towards independence in the Empire; Arab nationalism; the decline of British power; and Russian expansionism, all four of which would lead to the termination of British control in Aden. He asserted that the best way forward for the British Government in the Middle East was to enlist Arab nationalism against Russian expansionism, but this was only achievable once the British had pulled out of the region. Any attempt to arrest the abandonment of British power in the Middle East would fail to win any benefits and involve a military effort out of all proportion to the issues at stake[100]. This view was fairly radical for a British colonial official at this time, but was also a realistic summary of regional affairs, and would ultimately prove to contain a large amount of truth.

The follow up to this letter set out Luce's views on how the British Government should respond to the forces it faced in the Middle East[101]. The Governor set out three possible courses of: digging in and defending the British position; a very early withdrawal; or a gradual disengagement. The first was a continuation of the policy at the time of retaining indefinite control, which would mean increasing hostile propaganda, the rejection of federation as it would ultimately mean merging with Aden, and having to rely more and more heavily on British troops as the loyalty of the Arab forces would come under pressure. Moreover, as the security situation deteriorated, so would the strategic and economic value of Aden, and in the end Britain would either be defeated or have to withdraw, which in both cases would harm British interests. An early withdrawal would cut expenditure, but also involve breaking treaties and a loss of prestige which would again damage British interests in the Persian Gulf. Therefore,

---

[99] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 13, 1957-1958*, pp. 577-9, Letter from Luce to Gorell Barnes, 27 March 1958
[100] *ibid.*
[101] PRO CO 1015/1911/5 - *Letter from Luce to Gorell Barnes*, 28 March 1958

Luce favoured a gradual disengagement over ten years, building up a successor state which would be capable of determining its own future status. It is possibly because of this realisation that Luce changed his mind about federation and came to view it favourably as the basis for a potential successor state. As regards the effects on British interests, the Governor was of the opinion that securing Gulf oil supplies should depend on diplomacy and adapting to conditions rather than on military action. Moreover, Aden was only important in shipping terms in relation to the Suez Canal, as a trading centre its importance had decreased, and the refinery and bunkering services could either be still available or alternatives could be found within ten years. Therefore,

> "the relinquishment of control of Aden Colony within the next decade would not have such an effect on British strategic and economic interests as to make it preferable to retain control indefinitely in spite of all the difficulties and dangers inherent in such a policy"[102].

Again, these views were radical for the time, and, as Glen Balfour-Paul has pointed out, probably too radical for London to accept[103]. Luce, however, was convinced that it would do Britain more harm than good to retain indefinite control and as the move towards the Federation began to take shape, the Governor expanded on his proposals with a possible timetable. This involved "a simple association of Colony and Protectorate" which would not affect the status of the Colony, followed by a "firm constitutional arrangement" for a merger with protectorate status, and then the move towards complete independence[104]. The third phase, Luce reckoned, would be reached in ten years at the latest since the pace of disengagement was being forced by the developments towards creating a federation in Somaliland, and also the Iraqi coup was a new factor to be taken into account. The British Government at the time were preparing to make an announcement on the future of the Somaliland Protectorate, supporting independence and union with Somalia, a move which could have been compared unfavourably with the lack of constitutional progress in South Arabia. The situation in Iraq was also of concern as the pro-West government of King Faysal II and

---

[102] *ibid.*
[103] Balfour-Paul, Glen - *The end of empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991), p. 164
[104] PRO CO 1015/1911/50 - *Telegram Luce to Gorell Barnes*, 29 Nov. 1958

Nuri al-Sa'id was overthrown in a military coup in July 1958, ending British influence in the eastern Arab world. Admittedly, this third phase would cast doubt on Britain retaining independent defence rights in Aden, but it would be hoped that the move towards independence would have generated enough goodwill to ensure some form of defence treaty. In the Governor's opinion, the only alternative to actually coming to terms with Arab Governments to preserve the remaining British interests in the Middle East was "the suppression by increasingly forceful methods of a rapidly growing demand for self-determination stimulated by the Somaliland statement" (which would announce Britain's support for independence for the Somaliland Protectorate)[105]. Luce was afraid that the imminent announcement of constitutional advance in Somaliland would lead to similar demands from Adeni Arabs, but his long-term view was not shared by others in London.

The Chiefs of Staff saw the retention of Aden as vital if the British Government were going to maintain their policy of the time[106]. Moreover, whilst the first stage of Luce's proposals would not affect British defence rights, stage two might cause problems for operations in the Persian Gulf, and the third stage was not welcome to military chiefs, since,

> "once full independence had been granted the United Kingdom could not rely on using Aden as a base for the support of her interests elsewhere in the Arabian Peninsula or in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean area and would have to make other arrangements"[107].

Therefore, if Luce's proposals were to be accepted, the Chiefs of Staff warned, then "an alternative strategy for supporting military operations in the Persian Gulf area will have to be evolved"[108]. The defence staff were not the only ones with doubts about Luce's policy since Julian Amery (then with the Treasury, later at the Air Office) warned Gorell Barnes that Aden and the Federation should be kept apart since "overseas bases

---

[105] PRO CO 1015/1911/52 - *Telegram Luce to Gorell Barnes*, 4 Dec. 1958
[106] PRO DEFE 11/229/375 - *Memo from Secretary, CoS Committee to Secretary, JPS*, 6 Nov. 1958
[107] PRO CO 1015/1911/E/52B - *Policy in Somaliland and Aden*, Annex to COS (58) 287, 17 Dec. 1958
[108] *ibid.*

are only secure when they are under British sovereignty"[109]. One possible alternative raised by Amery and later by Duncan Sandys was to carve out sovereign base areas in Aden so as to retain British control over vital parts of the Colony, an idea which was closely looked at by defence chiefs and the Colonial Office in the early 1960s (see below, Chapter 4).

Even Luce's superiors were against encouraging a merger between the Colony and the Federation, preferring to maintain control over Aden for as long as the possibility of using force to defend British interests in the Gulf was necessary. The Colonial Secretary told Luce,

> "I and my colleagues see great difficulty in approving now a line of policy which would have the effect on the use of Aden base which, you have readily admitted, your proposals sooner or later would have. We do not underrate the difficulties and dangers of the alternative policy of maintaining Colonial status of Aden Colony indefinitely, and if necessary by force, but do not feel we would be justified in rejecting it definitely before the Chiefs of Staff have completed their study"[110].

This was the end of Luce's proposals, although he continued to argue in favour of them and did have the support of others, as the Chiefs of Staff declared that:

> "if Her Majesty's Government wishes to retain the ability to intervene quickly in the Persian Gulf area, there is no short term alternative to the retention of Aden as a base; and that a long term alternative would be very expensive to provide"[111].

Ultimately, however, Luce was proved right in his predictions as British rule in Aden only lasted until the end of 1967, the Colony and the Federation did merge, and events in the 1960s proved very costly to both Her Majesty's Government and its allies. It could be argued that those opposed to Luce's pragmatism believed that the British and Federal forces could deal with the opposition, and in 1958 that may well have been true,

---

[109] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 14, 1958-1960*, pp. 543-5, Minute from Julian Amery to Gorell Barnes, 8 Dec. 1958
[110] PRO CO 1015/1910/33 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Luce*, 24 Dec. 1958
[111] PRO DEFE 11/400/1166A - *Draft memo by Chief of Defence Staff on Aden*, 6 March 1959

but the opposition was to grow in strength and numbers, and even in the 1950s had already caused the British authorities a fair amount of difficulty.

The Early Nationalist Groups

The Aden Association

British control in Aden was, in comparison to control of the other interests in the Middle East, relatively secure until the 1950s. Unlike Iraq, Egypt, or Palestine there was no real political opposition to colonial rule from the indigenous population and there was no effective nationalist organisation until after World War Two. The phrase which best summed up the state of Adeni opinion about the British was "respectful hostility" at the time of the Suez crisis since, whilst there were strikes in support of Nasser, there was very little open denunciation of 'imperialism' and 'colonialism'[112]. However, things were changing as ideas and ideology spread into Aden and, in the 1960s and probably with lesser impact, into the tribal-based society of the Protectorate. This was enabled through transistor radios which brought Cairo's 'Voice of the Arabs' to the Colony and later on to the hinterland. The spread of a nationalist ideology was enhanced by the return of students and/or migrant workers from abroad where they had been introduced to the ideas of Arab Nationalism and Nasserism. The attitude to such ideologies was different in the Protectorate than it was in the Colony which had a large mercantile community and so was not attracted to the idea of Yemeni nationalism or the more parochial tribal values, but rather towards an urban, professional form of political organisation.

The first such organisation was the Aden Association (AA) which was established in 1950 and formed the main moderate nationalist party in the Colony in the 1950s, and was generally willing to work with the British to achieve their aim of 'Aden for the

[112] PRO CO 1015/1132/1 - *Letter from Luce to Lord Lloyd*, 21 Nov. 1956

Adenis'. The leaders of the AA were from the established merchant and notable families of Aden like the Luqmans, the Bayoomis and the Maqawis who had earlier established the Arab Reform Club in 1930 and the Arab Literary Club in the 1930s[113]. However, these clubs were criticised for being too close to the British and so the Aden Association was formed in an attempt by the leaders to distance themselves from the British, which was difficult to achieve given that the majority of its members were from the mercantile community whose fortunes were tied to those of the British. The Association advocated eventual independence for Aden within the Commonwealth, and was successful in legitimate Colony politics during the 1950s, dominating the elections to the Legislative Council in 1955 (winning three of the four seats, and the fourth being aligned to them) and 1959 (winning eleven of the twelve seats). Importantly, the same families also controlled the Colony newspapers, which were used to support their demand for a share in Adeni politics and shaping the future. However, the AA was weakened by its willingness to work with the British, which caused the Association to be denounced by the emerging radical nationalists and their popular call for full independence. There were also internal conflicts, which lead to the Association's split in 1960, nominally over the issue of merging with the Federation, but also because of a clash of personalities between Hassan Ali Bayumi and Muhammad Ali Luqman (the President of the AA) who set up their own parties following the split (see below, Chapter 4).

Until 1960, though, the AA was the main legitimate nationalist organisation, and as such, probably deserved more support from the British since it was the organisation most likely to co-operate with future policy. The Association's desire for a greater participation in the running of Aden was dashed by the visit of Lord Lloyd whose statement in May 1956 promising nothing more than "a considerable degree of self-government" was a disappointment to the Association which "had hoped for early internal self-Government but now accepts 1958 as the earliest date for any radical change and is planning accordingly"[114]. According to Hickinbotham, the AA blamed

[113] Lackner, Helen - *P.D.R. Yemen* (Ithaca Press, London, 1985), pp. 27-8
[114] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, p 147, Commonwealth Relations Office memorandum, 29 Aug. 1956

the activities of the more radical Nationalists like the South Arabian League and the United National Front for the lack of constitutional advance[115]. However, the reluctance of the British Government to relinquish control over the military base was the more realistic reason. Lord Lloyd, despite his statement against political progress, believed that the British should build up the Association into a stable party with popular support as the best way to defend the British Government's interests, but nothing came of this proposal[116].

The Aden Association was important as it was the first proper political organisation in the Colony, and its members continued to play prominent roles in the legitimate politics of Aden. However, its support rarely went beyond the wealthy mercantile community, and it is likely that if the elections of 1955 and 1959 had been based on wider electoral franchises, then they would not have had won by the considerable margins that they did. Moreover, the AA's willingness to work within the British political structure in Aden meant that it was an easy target for more radical groups who could accuse members of the Association of being 'imperial stooges'. This gave these latter groups the opportunity to attract the wider support of the lower classes and those attracted by Arab nationalism and the achievements of Nasser.

The South Arabian League

Before World War Two, the main challenge that the British had had to face in the hinterland was from dissident tribesmen, either because of a feud which drew in British/Ottoman (until 1918)/Yemeni involvement on one side or the other, or because of discontent with the effects of the 'forward policy'. However, this began to change in the late 1940s and 1950s as political ideas from outside South Arabia began to infiltrate the Protectorate and movements emerged which were not necessarily based on tribal groupings, but on ideology or issues. The League of the Sons of the South, which became the South Arabian League (SAL) was the main organisation of this kind in the

[115] PRO CO 1015/1202/19 - *Telegram Hickinbotham to Secretary of State for Colonies*, 25 May 1956
[116] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 148-9, Extract from Report by Lord Lloyd on his visit to Aden

Western Aden Protectorate, and dominated political life in the hinterland during the 1950s.

The League was established in 1950 by Muhammad Ali al-Jifri and Shaikhan al-Habshi who remained the two leading figures of the SAL until 1967. The aims of the League were total independence from Britain and the unification of Aden and the Protectorate. The organisation was the most powerful political voice in the hinterland until the emergence of the NLF and FLOSY after 1963. Its main support, like al-Jifri, came from Lahej which was both a benefit and a hindrance as, on the one hand, the state was the strongest and most developed in the WAP, but on the other, this aroused the rivalry of other states and tribes. There were few members from outside Lahej in the SAL, the notable exception being al-Habshi who was a Hadhrami, and the League had little influence outside of Lahej and Abyan. As with the Aden Association, the SAL's leaders were from society's notables and elite, albeit from the Protectorate rather than the Colony. This meant that, again like the AA, it was distanced from the lower classes, which hindered the League's attempts to win over the support of the migrant workers in Aden, despite large numbers of them coming from the Protectorate. However, the SAL did have more radical aims than the AA, especially the call for absolute and immediate independence from Britain, and it followed a pro-Nasser line as he was seen to be successful against colonialism.

Despite its call for Yemeni unity, the SAL opposed the move towards federation in 1954, but this was more to do with the personal ambitions of al-Jifri and the Sultan of Lahej than opposition to the concept as a whole. Sultan Ali abd al-Karim of Lahej had replaced his brother in 1952 after the latter, according to Hickinbotham, shot two of his relatives whilst under the influence of excessive alcohol[117]. The new Sultan was initially seen as a progressive and promising ruler by the British, but soon became too progressive for their liking. The reason for this was the Sultan's sympathy for the SAL, whose President, al-Jifri, was also Legal Adviser to al-Karim and Speaker of the Lahej

[117] Hickinbotham - *op. cit.*

Legal Assembly[118]. The League opposed Hickinbotham's federation proposal not only because of the British involvement, but also because it wanted the new institution to be based around Lahej's leadership, something which the other rulers did not favour.

The British too were not keen on the idea of a Lahej-centred federation given the strength of the SAL there and their increasing suspicion of the organisation, especially as Muhammad Aidrus was a supporter. Moreover, the activities of al-Jifri and al-Habshi in Aden lead to their expulsion from the Colony in August 1956 as the British began to regard the League as an increasingly dangerous organisation[119]. The SAL President first went to Cairo, then based himself in Lahej, but from there he had little effect on politics in Aden, which in turn gave the League little influence in the Colony:

> "The weakness of the leadership in the South Arabian League has also been shown up; Jifri seems to have stood head and shoulders above his other political colleagues, who appear for the moment to be at a loss to know what to do next"[120].

Despite this, the SAL was still viewed as "the strongest and most influential political organisation in southern Arabia", which was probably true in the Protectorate, but much less so in the Colony where the AA and the trades unions had far more support[121]. In fact, the British continued to over-estimate the strength and influence of the SAL right up to 1967, by which time it was a Saudi-backed body with little sway in the Protectorate, and effectively none in the Colony. However, in the 1950s, when it had the support of Nasser and the UAR, and was helping to co-ordinate the activities of the dissident groups in the hinterland, the League did have the ability to cause both the British and the rulers some problems.

The turning point for the SAL was in 1958 when Luce ordered the arrest of al-Jifri and his two brothers (Abdulla and Alawi) from their base in Lahej. The three, according to

---

[118] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 150-152, Intelligence Summary, Hickinbotham to Secretary of State for Colonies
[119] *ibid.*, p. 155, Secretary of State for Colonies to Prime Minister, August 1956
[120] PRO CO 1015/1132/1 - *Letter from Luce to Lennox Boyd*, 15 September. 1956
[121] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 157-62, Aden Intelligence Summary for September 1956

Luce, were in almost complete control of the Lahej administration and were conducting an anti-British campaign whilst the Sultan was intending to announce Lahej's attachment to the United Arab States (the union of Egypt, Syria and the Yemen)[122]. The attempted arrest in April 1958 failed, however, as both Muhammad and his brother Alawi escaped, although Abdullah was caught, whilst the Sultan of Lahej defected to Cairo in June with half of his army[123]. The new Sultan, Fadhl bin Ali, was, from a British perspective, to be "a great improvement on his predecessor" and later took Lahej into the Federation[124]. The SAL was thereby left leaderless in both Aden and the Protectorate. This was a serious blow to the League and marked its decline as a force in South Arabian politics:

> "The exclusion of its leader deprived the party of its former dynamism. The exiles in Cairo are unable to provide the day-to-day leadership and like most émigrés are becoming increasingly difficult to work with as they lose touch with their supporters in Aden"[125].

The South Arabian League was not only the first political organisation in the Aden Protectorate, it was also the most influential one during the 1950s, and even continued, albeit mistakenly, to be viewed by the British as a force right up to 1967. The League was able, although only to a limited extent, to attract support from across tribal and state barriers, the first organisation to achieve this in the Protectorate. However, it was hampered by being a Lahej-based organisation which lost it support from other states. Once its President, Muhammad Ali al-Jifri, was in exile in Cairo, the League lost its ability to exert influence on politics in both Aden and the Protectorate.

---

[122] *ibid.*, p. 452, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies
[123] PRO CO 1015/1835/13 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Protectorate*, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 29 May 1959
[124] *ibid.*
[125] PRO CO 1015/1835/14 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony*, Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 May 1959

The Trades Unions, the UNF and the ATUC

The economic and industrial growth of Aden in the years following World War Two lead to social and demographic shifts in the structure of the Colony. The increasing demand for labour as the port business grew in size and then the construction of the BP oil refinery meant the numbers of Yemeni and Protectorate migrants to the Colony grew to fill the demand. This in turn gave an impetus to demands for improved working and living conditions as the migrant labour force began to settle in Aden, whereas previously the workers had returned to their homes after a certain period of employment. The resulting rise in immigration, as a permanent work force replaced seasonal labour, would not only mean a change in labour conditions, but also have a direct impact on Adeni politics and British policy.

Trade unions had been legalised by the British in Aden in 1942, but none were actually formed until the European employees formed the Aden Port Pilots in 1952[126]. From the following year, however, the number of Arab unions rapidly increased, the first two being the Forces Civilian Employees Association and then the Aden Airways employees followed suit, and by August 1956 there were twenty-five trades unions in Aden[127]. As the unions grew in strength and numbers, their ability to express their discontent with working conditions increased as well. The unions were not strictly craft unions as there was very little Arab skilled labour, instead they were based around specific companies or plants, but they were not puppet unions of the employers, as the events of 1956 were to prove.

By 1956 the trades unions were becoming involved in the politics of the Colony as well as workers' rights. The elections of 1955 were opposed by various groups, including some of the unions, sections of the SAL, and also members of the Free Yemeni Movement, an anti-Imam organisation whose leaders were in exile in Aden. Together

---

[126] Watt, D.C. -'Labor Relations and Trades Unionism in Aden, 1952-1960' in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 16, no. 4, Autumn 1962, pp. 443-50

[127] 'Aden Trade Union Congress', *Trevaskis Papers, Part I: MSS Brit. Emp. S367*, Box 3, File 3 - Halliday stated there were only 21 unions, but Lackner and Watt stated this was the number that had registered with the ATUC by December 1956, see Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 181, Lackner - *op. cit.*, p.29 & Watt - *op. cit.*, p. 448

they formed the United National Front (UNF) to boycott the elections and demanded an unconditional right to vote and stand for election for every Aden-born Arab over 21 and every Aden-born non-Arab whose predecessors had been resident in the Colony "for a long time" or who had themselves been a resident for five years[128]. The UNF was short-lived as an effective organisation, but some of its members continued to play an important role in the political opposition to British ruler in Aden as leaders of the Aden Trades Unions Congress (ATUC).

The ATUC was established in March 1956, and had very close links to the UNF, as can be seen by comparing the membership of the two organisations. Muhammad Salim Ali Abdu, Sayyid Zain Sadiq, Abdullah al Asnag, Husain Salim Bawazir and Ali Uthman Muhammad were leaders in both organisations, and there were 60 other committee members of the ATUC that were known supporters of the UNF[129]. The Congress was formed after a series of 33 strikes in March 1956 which involved 7,000 men and nearly 130,000 working days lost, followed by two more waves of strikes in June-July and then August to December[130]. The British TUC was involved in establishing the ATUC, and contacts were maintained between the two organisations, but gradually the influence of the more political International Confederation of Trade Unions (ICTU) and the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) could be seen as strikes were used for political issues as well as labour issues. However, the initial industrial action was largely related to working conditions, as the Commission of Inquiry set up by the British reported. The Commission included a member of a local trade union, two members of the Legislative Council and a British former trade unionist and confirmed that there was a good deal of genuine grievances and a lack of machinery to deal with these grievances and let the workers discuss them with their employers[131]. The grievances centred on the hours and conditions of employment, the desire for benefits like housing and medical care, lack of compensation and national insurance,

---

[128] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 1955-1957*, pp. 101-5, UNF memo to Secretary of State for Colonies, 3 Dec. 1955
[129] 'Aden Trade Union Congress' - *op. cit.*
[130] Watt - *op. cit.*, p. 446
[131] *ibid.*, p. 447, & *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 12, 19955-1057*, p. 126, Cabinet Office meeting, 26 April 1956

and the muqaddam system of labour contractors[132]. In response to this the Colonial government set up conciliation machinery and Luce warned the employers to avoid any actions which might exacerbate the situation such as staff cuts. Industrial relations did improve during 1957, partly as a result of these measures[133].

It was hoped by the authorities that the ATUC would develop along the lines of the British trades unions, but gradually the Congress moved away from the Western model. The leadership of the unions came from the middle class, educated, 'white-collar' workers who were increasingly aware of events outside Aden, in particular Arab nationalism and Nasser. There was a general strike in October 1956 in support of the UAR over Suez, and in 1958 a new period of industrial unrest occurred. The leaders of the ATUC, in particular the Secretary-General Abdullah al Asnag, were using industrial action for political ends and provided the leadership for the boycott of the 1959 elections, which was remarkably successful since only 27% of the electorate actually voted[134].

The trade union movement began to be regarded as dangerous by the colonial authorities as it gained in influence. The first instance of this was the highly effective one-day general strike of 25th April which was followed by "violent and repeated attacks on the Government of Aden" by the newspaper 'Al Amel' (The Worker)[135]. The arrest and imprisonment of the journalist and printer of one article lead to a general strike and riots in October 1958, and Luce became increasingly worried about the direction the ATUC was taking:

> "Despite the absence of Communist influence in Aden it seems almost certain that the appeal of Arab nationalism must in the long run outweigh the attractions of friendly relations with the British Trades Union Congress and the anti-Communist International Confederation of Free Trade Unions"[136].

---

[132] A muqaddam would recruit labour on a tribal basis, and then sub-contract them to an employer, but exploited the system, retaining large percentages of workers' pay and providing poor housing
[133] PRO CO 1015/1837/1 - *Letter from Luce to Lennox Boyd*, 15 May 1957
[134] PRO CO 1015/1835/13 - *op. cit.*
[135] *ibid.*
[136] *ibid.*

For these reasons, the Congress was regarded "as the most serious threat to stability and security in the Colony"[137].

The success of the election boycott in 1959 gave the ATUC added impetus and, in the absence of any other opposition political party, it took over the nationalist leadership as a whole. This was especially true after the SAL faction in the Congress was defeated in 1959 leaving al Asnag and his allies in control of the leadership[138]. However, al Asnag claimed he was also under pressure from Cairo to politicise the unions and wanted help from the British Government against the employers and over the issue of immigration of Yemeni workers who formed a large section of the ATUC's support. The Governor, Luce, told al Asnag that the Government could do nothing about this, but got the impression from the ATUC leader that he was,

> "a good Trade Unionist, and I think he is genuinely anxious to get the A.T.U.C. away from its present heavy involvement in politics and back to more friendly relations with the Government. How far he will be able to do this remains to be seen"[139].

To what extent this assessment was accurate is difficult to gauge. It can certainly be argued that had the British Government given al Asnag more support and tried to reach a rapprochement between him and the 'legitimate' Colony politicians, then the eventual situation might well have turned out differently. However, the ATUC leader was seen as a 'radical' by many within the British establishment who would never have countenanced working with such a figure. Al Asnag possibly did actually have a moderating effect on the ATUC as a whole since, during his absence in London in November 1959 to discuss the control of immigration, the labour situation deteriorated with a 34-day strike called by the British Petroleum Aden Employees Union[140]. There was also a leadership struggle at the same time and personal conflicts were weakening the movement at times, which were not resolved until 1960 when the ICATU stepped in to arbitrate.

---

[137] *ibid.*
[138] PRO CO 1015/2489/4 - *Aden Colony and Aden Protectorate: Review of Affairs*
[139] *Records of Yemen, 1798-1960: Volume 15, 1958-1960*, pp. 304-7, Record of Discussion between al Asnag and Luce, 18 Nov. 1958
[140] Watt - *op. cit.*, p. 451

The leaders of the trades unions also formed the main nationalist leadership in the late 1950s and early 1960s, until the more extreme NLF was established and started rivaling the ATUC. However, this also meant that they were open to the accusation of abusing their power and using industrial action for political ends. At first the unions had legitimate reasons to strike over the poor working conditions in the Colony and many employers abused this and were forced to reform their practices. From early 1958 onwards, though, strikes were being used more and more as a political tool to express discontent over the elections or support for Nasser or to voice demands for independence. This would later lead the colonial authorities to limit their right to strike, and this left the Nationalists without a voice for a short period, until the unions formed their own political party.

Conclusion

The increasing importance of Aden to the British in the 1950s was largely due to the loss of colonies and mandates elsewhere. Nevertheless, the value of Aden as a military base to defend British interests in the Middle East and East Africa was increasingly clear. The tribal unrest in the Protectorate, however, threatened the British presence, forcing the Government to examine ways to maintain their presence at the least cost. The result was eventually the establishment of the Federation of Arab Amirates of the South which it was hoped would provide the foundations on which to build a future independent state in good relations with the United Kingdom. This hope, though, was increasingly uncertain given the growing influence of the Arab Nationalist opposition to colonial rule. Moreover, a new issue was becoming prominent around which the opposition could rally, the plan to merge the Colony with the Federation.

Chapter Four: Colony or Protectorate?, 1959-1963

Introduction

The formation of the Federation in 1959 had been conceived by the rulers and the British as the best way to defend the Protectorate against Yemeni subversion and the increasing opposition to colonial rule in South Arabia. However, this opposition was becoming stronger and gaining more support, in particular through the trade unions, at the same time as Aden was becoming vital to British strategic interests. The danger was that Aden would go the same way as Palestine and the Canal Zone, previous major British bases, a possibility Her Majesty's Government were extremely unwilling to allow whilst the 'east of Suez' policy dominated Whitehall thinking. Therefore, different policy options were proposed in the early 1960s to ensure continued British control in Aden, which also involved retaining British influence in the Federation to maintain a defensive barrier for the Colony. The question was whether to give the rulers a free reign over Aden to deal with the opposition as they liked, or whether to retain British sovereignty over the Colony in the face of worldwide opposition. Unsurprisingly, opinion was divided in London and Aden over allowing the accession of the Colony into the Federation, or maintaining sovereignty.

British Defence Policy and its Effect on Aden

Aden as Middle East Headquarters

During the 1950s, British defence policy concentrated on the nuclear deterrent, despite its ineffectiveness in limited conflicts, as shown by the Suez campaign (see above,

Chapter 2). However, towards the end of the decade, the British role overseas began to be re-examined and defence policy as a whole underwent some changes. The focus was on 'east of Suez', and conventional forces began to be upgraded to strengthen strategic mobility in order to defend British interests in the Persian Gulf and Indian Ocean area. This in turn saw an increased reliance on the base strategy, whereby troops could be garrisoned in one site and moved quickly to intervene in a trouble spot. The other factor involved in the base strategy was that it avoided the difficulties of getting over-flying rights from a hostile state in a potential emergency situation. The effect on Aden was significant as the military establishment there grew from a small scale base to one of the two major overseas British military bases in the world (Singapore being the other) between 1957 and 1960 when the Colony was made Headquarters of Middle East Command (HQ MEC).

The initial problem with converting Aden into Middle East headquarters was accommodation for the services. After the Suez Crisis, the number of servicemen in Aden increased fourfold from 1956 to 1959 which meant there was a serious lack of accommodation, and that was in poor condition[1]. The military complained about the "scandalously inadequate" accommodation[2]. However, the Treasury were unwilling to allow construction "on the assumption that the security of tenure in Aden may not be more than five years"[3]. These uncertainties about the future of Aden meant that the base was "grossly overcrowded"[4] because of Whitehall's refusal to permit the construction of more accommodation. Moreover, to move troops from Aden to Kenya or the UK would have been "strategically unacceptable" as the numbers that would have needed to be relocated to make "a worthwhile contribution to the accommodation problem" would have endangered the security of British interests[5].

Despite these complaints, and the need for redeployment from Kenya, a construction ban was imposed to save expenditure. By early 1962, however, there were 2,400 Army

---

[1] Darby, Phillip - *British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968* (OUP, London, 1973), pp. 209-10
[2] PRO DEFE 11/400/1154 - *HQ BFAP to MoD London*, 14 Feb. 1959
[3] PRO DEFE 11/400/1158 - *Butler to CoS Committee*, 20 Feb. 1959
[4] PRO DEFE 11/429/1235 - *Secretary of State for Air to Prime Minister*, 14 Dec. 1959
[5] PRO DEFE 11/429/1253 - *Forces in Aden*, 16 Dec. 1959

personnel to relocate from East Africa[6]. This was not practicable in Aden and would have involved a construction programme of four-and-a-half years[7]. The military chiefs were aware of the uncertain security of tenure in Aden and agreed that "it might be considered prudent if the building programme was halted in 1965"[8]. Moreover, Ministers "made the point that an investment of eleven million pounds in building in Aden which would not be required until 1964 and which might be unusable after 1970 was not compatible with sound financial planning"[9]. However, despite these misgivings, the need to accommodate the growing number of servicemen in Aden, and the belief that the Colony was of vital importance to British interests, meant that the construction ban was lifted, although the number of families was to be limited[10].

The need to economise meant that there were policy clashes between the Treasury and the Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence as the restrictions of the British economy did not always match the ability to maintain an overseas role. However, successive British politicians, both Conservative and Labour, sought to pursue the 'east of Suez' policy even whilst cuts were being made to the defence budgets and the armed forces. The role of Aden in this policy was firstly as a military base for the defence of British interests primarily in the Persian Gulf, but also in Muscat and Oman and the Horn of Africa, as well as an air staging post, naval base and telecommunications[11]. Defending British responsibilities and interests from Sudan in the west to Iran in the north and east required considerable expenditure, however, and this in turn put extra pressure on British finances. Moreover, there were also questions being asked in London, both by the politicians and the media. The Daily Telegraph warned:

> "Nevertheless it is only reasonable, before sinking great sums in Aden to recall a few precedents where bases have been vastly improved ... only to be evacuated a

[6] PRO DEFE 7/2200/46 - *Report for CoS Committee Meeting*, 10 April 1962
[7] PRO DEFE 7/2200/38 - *Draft Note to CoS*, 27 March 1962
[8] PRO DEFE 7/2200/46 - *op. cit.*
[9] PRO DEFE 11/163/31 - *MoD London to CinC ME*, 18 May 1962
[10] PRO DEFE 11/163/62 - *MoD to CinC ME*, 14 Nov. 1963
[11] PRO DEFE 11/229/381 - *Possible Military Enclave in Aden Colony*, 14 Nov. 1958, & PRO DEFE 11/229/419 - *Minimum British Military Requirements in Aden*, JPS Report for CoS Committee, 30 June 1959

few months later ... It would be foolish to make the same mistakes about Aden"[12].

During the debate over the 1960 White Paper a number of speakers criticised the lack of facilities and the "slum conditions" the servicemen lived in[13]. In the late 1940s and 1950s, it should be noted, Britain had been pressured into relinquishing control over its bases in Palestine and the Canal Zone. Moreover, the base in Cyprus had caused severe friction with the local population which had impaired its efficacy. Finally, at the time of expanding the Aden base, troops were being evacuated from Kenya as independence was imminent. Despite this, 'east of Suez' and the enlarging of the Aden base continued to be British policy in the early 1960s - at the same time as the British Government's control over the Colony was beginning to look more and more tenuous.

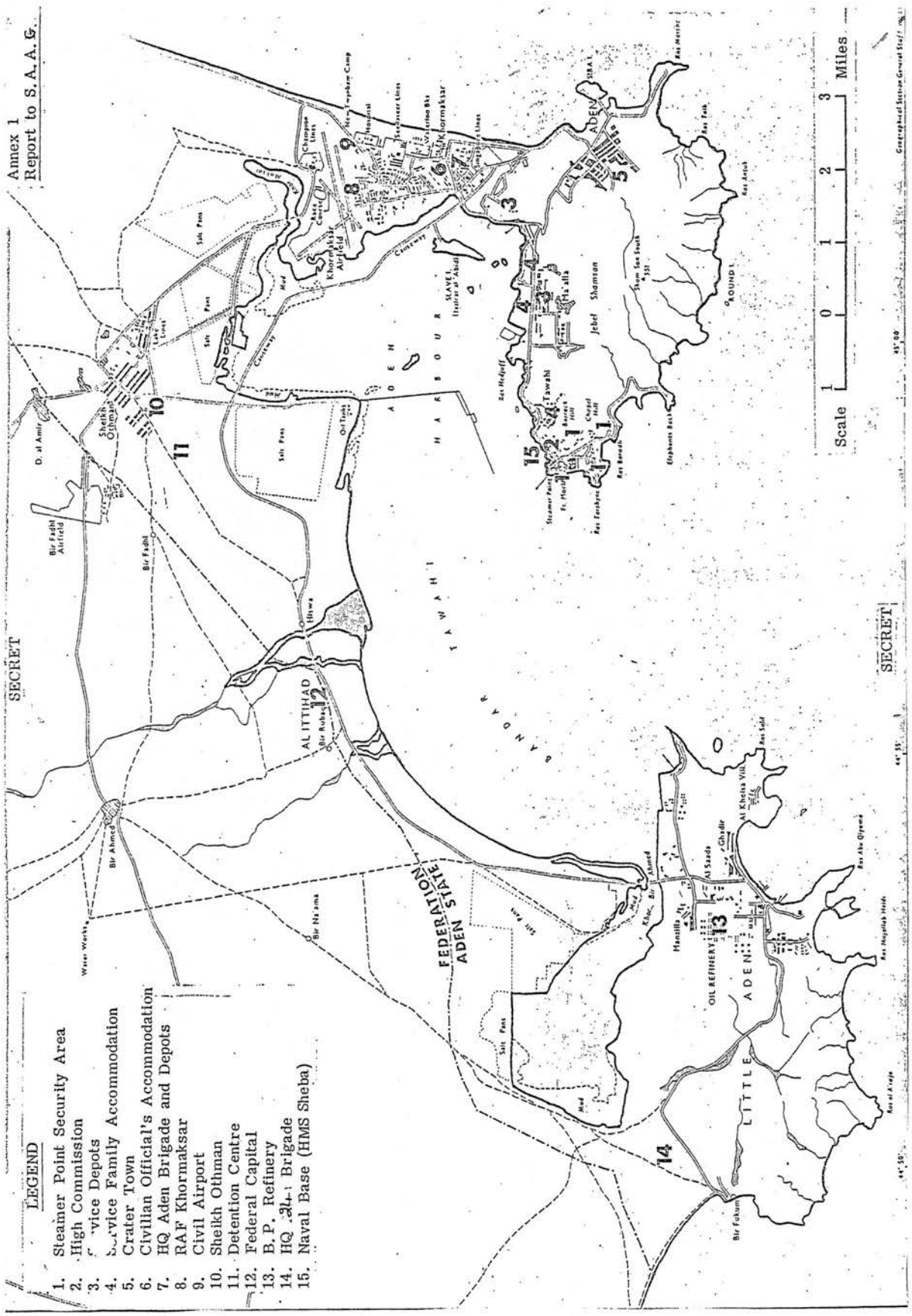
Sovereign Base Areas

The proposals by William Luce to gradually relinquish control over Aden and grant independence, or else be forced out, were rejected by Whitehall (see above, Chapter 3). However, the need to grant some form of constitutional advance was admitted, otherwise there would be no support for British rule from even the moderates in the Colony. Therefore, a new constitution was introduced in late 1958, and voting took place in January 1959 to give the Legislative Council an elected majority, albeit on a very limited franchise. This did alert the Ministry of Defence to the possibility of eventual independence and gradual loss of control over the Colony. This process endangered the security of the base, which was seen as vital to the defence of British interests overseas. The Chiefs of Staff, therefore, began to examine alternatives to the status quo, whether it involved moving from Aden, or excising areas of the Colony to form sovereign base areas (SBAs).

[12] 'Aden Amenities', *Daily Telegraph*, 19 Dec. 1959, in Darby, Phillip - *op. cit.*, p. 209
[13] *ibid.*, p. 209

Map 4: British Military Installations in Aden[16]

[16] PRO DEFE 11/506



The first study of a possible military enclave in the Colony was in 1958 when the Chiefs of Staff examined the suggestion for the Colonial Office[15]. The constitutional changes due in 1959 might have permitted the possibility of either a base to sustain operations in support of British policy in the Gulf and Arabian Peninsula (Case A) or an air staging post with access from the sea (Case B) (see Map 3, p. 108, for the extent of British military and civilian installations in the Colony). The first possibility would have required the ability to defend British interests in the region by intervening with naval, land and air forces in the Protectorate, the Gulf, Muscat and Oman and the Horn of Africa. This necessitated the incorporation of a command and communications centre, and airfield, air defence, port facilities, accommodation, training facilities and administrative installations. Moreover, the base would have to be capable of sustained defence against outside attack, be self supporting in an emergency, have freedom of access by air and sea, and should cause the least possible resentment to the surrounding population. To achieve all of this, Case A would have to include the town of Aden and almost all inhabited parts of the Colony, which the Chiefs of Staff believed was an unrealistic expectation. Case B would have included the airfield at Khormaksar and a deep water harbour for supplies. This was much smaller than Case A, but would still cut off the capital of the Federation from the hinterland and the Federal states themselves. Moreover, it could not defend itself against outside attack and so would depend on the goodwill of the surrounding states, and would only be "slightly less objectionable on political grounds" than Case A, without any of the latter's compensating advantages. The report concluded,

> "that the physical size and the geographical factors which would determine the location of an enclave in Aden Colony, whether it were sufficient to sustain Her Majesty's Government's present policy in the Persian Gulf or merely sufficient for use as a staging post, are such that the retention of such an enclave cannot be considered politically realistic"[16].

---

[15] DEFE 11/229/397 - *Possible Military Enclave in Aden Colony*, Memorandum by the Chiefs of Staff for the COS Committee, 8 Dec. 1958
[16] *ibid.*

The military requirements for a major overseas base were significant and the Aden base incorporated parts of the actual town unlike the self-sufficient base in Cyprus which had been excised from the independent state. Cutting out the Aden base would have been politically undesirable and impractical given the need for water supplies and electricity which were based in the Colony. The Joint Planning Staff outlined the minimum necessary for a sovereign base to fulfill British responsibilities and defend the British Government's interests in 1959, and the list was extensive[17]. Accommodation alone was over 8,000 personnel plus families and dependents (Navy 100, Army 3,000, RAF 5,000) whilst there was also the need for fuelling facilities for warships, storage for supplies, unimpeded access to harbour wharves for the Army as well as deep water berths and maintenance facilities for the Navy, an airfield with staging facilities, communications and broadcasting facilities, and so forth. Moreover, the British Government would have required inviolate rights over accommodation, military installations, air space and territorial waters, the right to defend military areas without restriction, the rights to purchase additional sites if necessary, freedom of movement for personnel and vehicles, overflying and staging rights outside military areas, the use of all public utilities, special legal facilities and the rights to obtain fuel supplies from the refinery. This list of minimum requirements and rights was deemed necessary to carry out British operational commitments in the region, and involved having ultimate control over the airfield, the port, and large parts of the inhabited areas of the Colony. Given all these requirements, it was hardly surprising that the Chiefs of Staff pointed out that to have sovereign base areas would have involved putting almost the entire Colony under British military control, an unrealistic aim. However, as the base was still regarded as necessary to British interests, a solution had to be found to maintain minimum military requirements whilst the Federation and Colony moved towards constitutional advance and possible merger.

Despite the early opposition of the military to the idea of creating a military enclave in the Colony, the idea persisted among policy-makers in Whitehall, chief among them being Duncan Sandys, Minister of Defence then Secretary of State for the Colonies. The issue was raised again in August 1961, but once again the Joint Planning Staff

[17] PRO DEFE 11/229/419 - *op. cit.*

came to the conclusion that an enclave in Aden was impracticable as it would cover half the usable surface of the Colony, create political resentment and prejudice any future constitutional settlement. Even a single enclave at Khormaksar would cut Aden off from the Protectorate and so was politically undesirable[18]. However, it was recommended that the situation should be reviewed from time to time, and so the idea was never really dropped until the decision to withdraw was taken in 1964. The Colonial Office were totally opposed to military enclaves as it was impossible to physically disentangle the base areas from the rest of the Colony, and the Chiefs of Staff were in agreement[19]. However, the latter had to investigate the alternatives to full sovereignty over the whole Colony as the proposed merger of Aden with the Federation began to become a reality in 1962[20].

Impact of the Kuwait Operation

The problem affecting British policy-makers was that in order to defend British interests east of Suez, a large military base at Aden was vital. This had been proved, according to defence chiefs, by the intervention in Kuwait in 1961, an operation which was used to justify a continued presence in Aden. In June 1961, an exchange of notes between Great Britain and the amirate of Kuwait abrogating the treaty of protection and declaring Kuwait's independence had provoked a furious response from General Qassem in Iraq who asserted that the amirate was part of Iraq. Rumours of troop movements in Iraq and the probable lack of any warning of an attack alarmed the British, and the Ruler of Kuwait was asked to make a formal request for British assistance. The Amir did this on 30th June and operation 'Vantage' was implemented in the first week of July to deploy the forces necessary to counter a full-scale Iraqi attack. However, the alleged threat to Kuwait never materialised and an Arab Deterrent Force was established by the Arab League to protect the amirate which meant the British forces withdrew[21]. Whilst there was never an actual invasion of Kuwait at that

[18] PRO DEFE 11/421/57 - *Defence Facilities in Aden and Socotra*, Report by JPS, 10 Aug. 1961
[19] PRO CO 1015/2389/231-2 - *Minute from Morgan to Eastwood*, 4 Jan. 1962
[20] PRO FO 371/162787/B1051/36 - *Retention of Defence Facilities in Aden*, COS Report, 5 July 1962
[21] Ashton, Nigel John - *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1996), pp. 220-30

time, the perceived threat to British interests there, and the operation to defend those interests, was a major factor supporting those in favour of retaining a base in Aden, preferably with full sovereignty to grant freedom of action. The operation was viewed as a success, and allegedly underlined the British Government's ability to play a major role outside Europe. This, though, was never actually put to the test by a confrontation with Qassem's forces, which would have had the advantage of a surprise attack given the lack of British intelligence in southern Iraq.

The Kuwait intervention did underline the need for strategically mobile forces to support British commitments east of Suez. In the 1962 White Paper the British Government sought to strengthen the UK's ability to defend their commitments in the Indian Ocean region[22]. The Paper declared "its intention to keep British forces stationed in Aden", which required bases by sovereign right even after the merger[23]. The Kuwait operation had meant drawing on units in Germany, Cyprus, Kenya, Singapore, and especially the UK, which had weakened the strategic reserve. Despite this, the strain on defence resources was not used as an excuse to cut commitments. Instead the base strategy was developed which meant the continued development and expansion of Aden, even though the increasing likelihood was that tenure of the base would only last until 1970, at the very latest. However, that Britain needed Kuwait, and therefore needed Aden was the argument which defined British policy in the early 1960s, and was used to justify the huge expenditure on construction and security of the base:

> "Aden is no ordinary military base. Kuwait is essential to the strength of the British economy ... Kuwait is, however, impossible, or extremely difficult, to defend without Aden ... But Aden will be impossible to hold, throughout the politically difficult period for which we shall require it, without substantially increased aid"[24].

Kuwait and the defence of British interests were therefore used as excuses for the various examinations of the practicalities of sovereign base areas as "our military

---

[22] Darby, Phillip - *op. cit.*, pp. 223-4
[23] PRO CO 1015/2389/322 - *Draft Policy Statement*, 5 July 1962
[24] PRO CO 1015/2395/43 - *Report from Governor to Secretary of State for Colonies*, 17 May 1962

presence in the Middle East depended to such an extent on Aden that sovereignty over the whole Colony should be retained for as long as possible"[25]. However, since the merger of Colony and Federation was imminent, this meant that independence would be increasingly likely to follow shortly and so alternatives had to be examined.

According to the Chiefs of Staff, the main alternatives to SBAs (Course A), which would have been dependent on the Colony's water supplies and the availability of Adeni labour and civil facilities and so impractical, were: to concentrate facilities in Khormaksar and Little Aden/Hiswa areas (Course B); to concentrate facilities just in Little Aden/Hiswa (Course C); to re-locate to the Protectorate or Socotra (Course D); or to depend on a defence treaty with an independent Aden (Course E). Course B would have taken 5-6 years and £40 million to complete, even after which the day-to-day operation of the base would have remained dependent on Adeni goodwill and the retention of the only airfield. Course C was also rejected due to length of time (10-12 years) and cost (£75-80 million) as well as dependent on local goodwill for access, whilst the cost of Course D would have been "prohibitive". The remaining option was to negotiate a defence treaty, but as the Federation would come under increasing international pressure, it would have become more and more difficult for the British Government to exercise defence rights. Therefore, the Chiefs of Staff could,

> "see no secure way of retaining our defence facilities in Aden short of retaining full sovereignty over the Colony. Failing this, the best course would be to negotiate a defence treaty, but there would always be the risk that Adeni co-operation would be withdrawn, possibly at a vital time. The alternatives to a defence treaty would provide no better safeguards and would be extremely costly"[26].

If facilities had to be limited then the chiefs would still wish to retain overflying rights, signalling facilities, naval fuelling facilities and communications, "but those facilities alone would not enable us to meet our full commitments in the Middle East"[27].

---

[25] PRO FO 371/162787/B1051/36 - *op. cit.*
[26] *ibid.*
[27] *ibid.*

Despite this report, Duncan Sandys still felt it would be desirable, before the merger, to separate the essential military bases from the Colony and retain them as SBAs outside the Federation "as was done in Cyprus"[28]. The analogy to Cyprus was misleading, however, as the bases there had not been part of the inhabited areas of the island, rather they had been separate entities, which was definitely not the case in Aden. Sandys either did not realise this, or conveniently ignored it and he continued to support the idea of excluding the base areas. He maintained his position even after he was informed by the Ministry of Defence that he would need to negotiate the,

> "outright exclusion of certain areas. A mere treaty right to withdraw the areas in question [British military installations and bases] would probably be of very slender value and might even be counter-productive"[29].

This proposal was opposed by the Governor of Aden, Sir Charles Johnson, since SBAs would have been attacked by the Arab world, they could only have been achieved at the cost of full independence for the rest of the Colony, they would have contained half the usable land area, the oil refinery and airfield (unlike Cyprus) and they would have ended Adeni goodwill and disrupted the merger plans[30]. This argument was supported by the Chiefs of Staff who told Sandys that the base would be useless without Adeni goodwill, even if independence were to be granted in the four to seven years time that the Colonial Secretary envisaged[31]. Colonial Office officials also opposed the ideas of their Secretary of State since the administration and finance of the SBAs would be so involved and full of discord that they would destroy any remaining goodwill of the local population[32].

Duncan Sandys did not drop the idea of excluding the base areas from the Colony, however, and the debate over the issue continued through 1962 and 1963. The Ministry of Defence again pointed out that the base could not function efficiently in the face of

---

[28] PRO CO 968/707/12 - *Record of Meeting held in the Lord Chancellor's Office*, 2 Aug. 1962
[29] PRO CO 968/707/26 - *Memo from Minister of Defence to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 13 Aug. 1962
[30] PRO CO 968/707/68 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 2 Oct. 1962
[31] PRO DEFE 11/166/330 - *Retention of Defence Facilities in Aden*, COS Meeting, 2 Oct. 1962
[32] PRO 968/707/re:/70 - *Memo from Cumming-Bruce to Armitage-Smith*, 5 Oct. 1962

Adeni ill will and that to carve out even the smallest base areas would arouse violent opposition:

> "we do not think that the loss of goodwill which will inevitably follow [the establishment of SBAs] will be in any way compensated for by the legal rights [i.e. sovereignty] to which Mr. Sandys attaches such importance. Sovereign base areas, with all the local inconvenience involved will always provide ready material for Arab nationalist propaganda"[33].

Sandys seemed to believe that if the British Government excised the SBAs before the merger then somehow this would make the Adenis more used to the base, and therefore accept the facts of the situation. However, "the converse is at least as likely to be true" since the probable outburst of opposition to the idea would have jeopardised the whole merger process[34]. The "advantages" that Sandys believed would have been accrued from an early excision did not exist according to the Ministry of Defence since any attempt to create sovereign base areas would have reduced whatever goodwill remained in Aden towards the British Government, and possibly created a "very dangerous internal security situation"[35].

There was almost universal opposition to the sovereign base areas plan in both London and Aden, but this did not solve the problem of granting constitutional advance, whilst also retaining the necessary facilities to defend British interests east of Suez. As long as policy-makers refused to countenance a reduction in British commitments, then Aden was perceived as vital to the British Government's overseas policy. Until that situation changed, then the problem remained. The idea of carving out sovereign base areas in the heart of the Colony was finally perceived as impracticable and politically undesirable, but alternatives had to be found if east of Suez was to continue to be the defining aim of British policy.

Sandys never fully gave up on the idea of establishing sovereign British territory in South Arabia, although he did seem to relent on actually doing so in the Colony itself.

---

[33] PRO DEFE 11/166/463 - *Retention of Defence Facilities in Aden*, Draft Brief for Minister of Defence and Chiefs of Staff, 15 Oct. 1962
[34] *ibid.*
[35] *ibid.*

However, this did not mean the end of the British base in Aden, just that certain adjustments had to be made to retain sovereignty. The idea of relying on a defence treaty was never fully accepted by the Colonial Secretary, despite the arguments put forward by the Defence Chiefs and the Governor of Aden and Commander-in-Chief of Middle East forces who were pragmatic enough to realise that if they could not have sovereignty, then a treaty was better than nothing. Sandys, however, maintained that some form of SBA could be created, and he continued to argue for sovereignty rights rather than treaty rights.

The Merger of Aden and the Federation

Weaknesses of the Federation

British policy in South Arabia was always dominated by external influences and interests. Before 1947 Aden's prime value had been as a port on the sea route to India, and as a secondary line of defence for the Suez Canal, whilst the Protectorate had never been more than a defensive 'glacis' for the Colony. This gradually changed as regards Aden during the 1950s as the base was built up until it became headquarters of Middle East Command, but the hinterland remained of value only as an extra line of defence. The creation of the Federation of the Arab Amirates of the South in February 1959, tied the British much more closely to the interests and needs of the traditional rulers of South Arabia. The Treaty signed with the Federation in 1959 committed Her Majesty's Government to help the new political body to become politically and economically independent. Initially, this aided both sets of signatories as the British now had an ally against the growing movement of Arab Nationalism, and the Federation received military and financial support in its move to reach statehood. However, ultimately, the ties proved a weakness to both sides as British actions were limited by international opinion, and the Federation could not stand on its own without British forces.

The British position in South Arabia by the end of the 1950s was only still strong in Luce's opinion, because the opposition was weak, and it was being further undermined by the introduction of constitutional advances[36]. Luce also believed that further development was necessary, including the merger of the Colony with the Federation, and eventual independence (see above, Chapter 3). However, his superiors in London could not countenance such a "radical" move whilst the base in Aden was still necessary to defend the British Government's interests in the Gulf. In fact, opinion in South Arabia did seem to be moving towards a merger of Aden and the Federation, but the British Government were not in favour of supporting this, even whilst supporting the merger of Somalia with the Somaliland Protectorate in 1959[37]. The Cabinet were aware of the support for a merger, but the base in Aden came before everything else:

> "the Colonial Secretary said that pressure was building up, comparatively slowly in the Aden Protectorate Federation but more strongly in the Colony, for the merger of the Colony and the Protectorate and for their ultimate independence. If the retention of our military base in Aden was essential for our future strategic purposes ... it would be preferable that the Colony should remain separate from the Federation"[38].

For this reason, no statement was to be made about a possible merger.

The difficulties of a merger were highlighted by the Colonial Secretary, Lennox-Boyd, in a letter to Luce in 1959[39]. Fortunately, the announcement regarding future policy and federation in Somaliland had produced no adverse reaction in Aden making it possible to avoid any firm commitment on future policy between the Colony and the Protectorate. The Federal Ministers and the Colony politicians both hoped ultimately to achieve some form of closer association, although for different reasons. The Federal politicians were keen to prevent Aden falling into the hands of Egypt or Yemen

---

[36] PRO CO 1015/1835/14 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony*, Governor of Aden to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 28 May 1959

[37] PRO CO 1015/1927/6 - *Supplementary Note for Aden*, Feb. 1959 - according to this, Adeni politicians were to be told that "circumstances are entirely different in southern Arabia" as HMG's ties with the Protectorate rulers were designed to maintain the latter's independence from pore powerful neighbours whilst the Colony was a cosmopolitan town with large minorities, they could not admit the real reason which was refusal to lose control over the military base

[38] PRO CO 1015/1912/76 - *Extract from Cabinet Meeting*, 8 Sep. 1959

[39] PRO CO 1015/1912/77 - *Letter Lennox-Boyd to Luce*, 18 Sep. 1959

controlled "demagogues", whilst the Adenis wanted to advance the Colony from colonial status and rally popular support to themselves. However, once again,

> "The first object to Her Majesty's Government's policy in Aden Colony and Protectorate, in present circumstances, must be to secure the use of Aden Colony as a military base for as long as possible"[40].

Moreover, the Colony was developing towards self-government with an elected majority legislature, whilst the Federation "remains a traditional South Arabian feudal oligarchy", creating considerable practical difficulties. Therefore, Luce's proposed policy of announcing that the British Government would not stand in the way of a merger was not to happen, and "a public statement of policy in this issue should be avoided". The one compromise Lennox-Boyd would allow was if the Legislative Council leaders pressed Luce, then he could privately indicate to them that the British Government would not stand in the way of co-operation in matters of health, education and communications, but the initiative, as with the original Federation proposals in 1954, was not to come from the British.

The concern with unfettered use of the base, therefore, meant that a merger of the Colony and Federation was ignored by the British at first. This did not stop the expansion of the Federation in other directions, however, as more Protectorate states saw the benefits of unity with their erstwhile rivals. Lahej was the first to join with the original six states in 1959, an important addition as the state was the most powerful and wealthy in the Western Protectorate. The following year, the lower Aulaqi Sultanate, Dathina and the Arabia Shaikhdom also acceded to the Federation, and in 1962 Wahidi in the EAP joined, bringing the total number to eleven. This strengthened the institution, but the Federation was still inherently weak due to its reliance on British military and financial support. The lack of material resources meant that the Federal Government relied almost totally on the annual payment of £1.5 million from the British Government to survive and economically develop[41]. Furthermore, politically the Federation was undeveloped in comparison to the advancing Colony. These

---

[40] *ibid.*

[41] Johnston, Charles - *The View from Steamer Point* (Cox & Wyman Ltd., London, 1964), pp. 30-1

problems were not insurmountable, but large amounts of money and support would have been necessary to bring the Federation up to the level of the Colony, let alone become self-sustainable. However, as British policy-makers began to see the advantage of an Aden-Federation merger, the financial and political differences were ignored, a sharp contrast to the policy of 1959 when they had been the main excuse for keeping the two entities apart.

Initial Hesitations and Differences

During 1960, British policy came around to the potential benefits of permitting the accession of Aden Colony into the Federation. This was by no means a unanimous decision on the part of Whitehall, but pressure from officials in Aden, as well as the Adeni politicians and Federal Ministers meant that the idea had to be at least investigated properly. There were numerous obstacles to overcome, not least the disparities of income and constitutional development between the two bodies, as well as mutual distrust, but the dangers and threat of Arab nationalism gave added impetus to all sides concerned.

The problem that constantly confronted British policy-makers was the perceived conflict between retaining use of the base, but at the same time helping the Colony develop politically and constitutionally so that it could achieve independence. Luce was afraid that "another, and inevitably big, advance by the Colony along the Westminster road will help our enemies, alienate our friends and rapidly jeopardise British interests in this area"[42]. He therefore favoured turning the Colony into a Protectorate and merging it with the Federation to give the Rulers control over Aden[43]. However, this conflicted with the belief among policy-makers at the Ministry of Defence and Colonial Office that sovereignty alone would ensure control over the base. This view, though, ignored the increasing calls for independence in Aden, including those from members of the elected Legislative Council. In 1960 Saeed M. Hasson

[42] PRO CO 1015/2392/1 - *Letter from Luce to Melville*, 3 Sep. 1960
[43] *ibid.*

aimed to move a motion requesting the Governor to inform the British Government of the desire of the people of Aden to rule themselves and become independent within two years[44]. Luce regarded this as "a most unfortunate" motion and was able to amend it to request the Governor to "consult in due time with all interested parties about the question of further constitutional development"[45]. However, the issue showed that not all the 'moderates' in the Legislative Council were prepared to let the British move at their own pace, and Luce was only able to deflect that attempt because the Executive Council were opposed to the motion as they did not want Hasson to gain political credit.

The appeal of Arab nationalism and the call for independence were both gaining popularity, which was making it increasingly difficult for the British to resist the pressure. The Colonial Office were aware of this and the idea that perhaps the British Government should take the initiative began to be considered:

> "There can be no doubt that, with individual exceptions, all the Arabs in Aden Colony want independence and since they are in the majority of the population, this force cannot be resisted indefinitely"[46].

It was this realisation that British control of Aden might not survive as long as the Government and the Defence Chiefs desired that caused the re-think of defence policy and the examination of sovereign base areas. As regards political developments, the main factor concerning policy-makers seemed to be keeping the Colony 'moderates' and the Federal rulers in power as they were the closest allies to the British, and the ones most dependent on the British Government for survival. Moreover, there was a perceived need to ensure that a friendly government assumed power on independence, as there was little chance of finding a military alternative to Aden, and (as noted above), a defence treaty with an independent South Arabia was better than nothing, although far from ideal. For this reason, the Ministry of Defence advocated that the Government "should devote all our energies to finding and developing a political solution to the

---

[44] PRO CO 1015/2386/4 - *Luce to Secretary of State for Colonies*, 9 Sep. 1960
[45] *ibid.*
[46] PRO CO 1015/2392/4a - *Minute by Kirkman*, 11 Oct. 1960

long-term problem" of being forced out of Aden by a hostile state and with nowhere to go to defend interests in the Gulf[47]. Therefore, when certain members of the Legislative Council unofficially contacted some of the Federal Ministers on a possible merger, there was no obstacle raised by the British, as there was a growing realisation that overseas interests might best be defended by keeping the British Government's allies in power and stopping the Nationalists[48].

One problem was the fundamental political difference between the Colony politicians and the Federal Ministers over the issue of constitutional development. Both sides were willing to discuss a merger, but the Federal rulers refused to permit any form of constitutional advance before the merger took place, whereas the Adenis demanded the British granted them some form of self-determination before joining the Federation. At a meeting of the Supreme Council of the Federation with Melville (of the Colonial Office) and Kennedy Trevaskis (Adviser and British Agent in WAP) in November 1960, Sharif Husain of Beihan (Federal Minister of the Interior) stated that "the persons who are called Adenis are quite unfit to rule Aden either now or in the future"[49]. The Federal Ministers wanted Aden to join the Federation, but not at the cost of constitutional development as Adeni self-determination could have put the port beyond Federal control. The exception to this was Muhammad Farid (Minister of Finance), who had once been a member of the SAL, and felt "something should be done in the way of constitutional changes before 1962 (when current constitution expires)"[50]. The rest of the Ministers, however, were opposed to self-determination for the Colony[51].

The Adeni Ministers realised that as colonial control diminished with constitutional development, then they were open to attack from the Nationalists, so,

---

[47] PRO CO 1015/2392/E/18A - *Letter from E.W. Playfair (MoD) to Sir Frederick Koyer Millar*, 4 Nov. 1960
[48] PRO CO 1015/2386/7 - *Agenda for Discussion at Government House with Melville*, 10 Nov. 1960
[49] PRO CO 1015/2386/8 - *Special Meeting No. 64 of the Supreme Council of the F.A.A.S.*, 12 Nov. 1960
[50] *ibid.*
[51] *ibid.*

> "They see in the Protectorate Rulers a strong and conservative element which would be reluctant to see extreme nationalism flourish in the Colony and which would in consequence sustain them against internal and external pressures"[52].

This gave both sides a common opponent, but the Aden Legislative Council could not oppose constitutional development due to the growing demand for independence in the Colony, which meant that the problem of self-determination remained. However, the advantages of a merger for both moderates and rulers were such that discussions were still able to take place.

Luce had been replaced by Charles Johnston at the end of 1960, and one of the new Governor's first tasks was to investigate the question of a merger and recommend a course of action, which he duly did in March 1961. A major problem was the need to reach a final decision well before the end of the Legislative Council session in January 1963,

> "otherwise we risk giving the impression of abandoning orderly methods and indulging in last-minute jiggery-pokery, thus adding gratuitously to the difficulty of defending our action in public"[53].

The most difficult aspect, according to Johnston, was the exact relationship between constitutional advance and merger and which should come first? Clearly, the British had to permit the promised development, but the problem was the probable Federal opposition to advance before merger. Federal Ministers believed they would be able to control the political situation, and the security situation, in the Colony better than the British - but only if there was no constitutional advance before a merger. Moreover, what was to be the exact status of Aden within the Federation? Should it have equal status to the rest of the states combined (Adeni view) or merely as one more state within a larger body (Federal view)? Johnston believed the Colony should have some special status, but again a compromise would have to be reached with the Federal

---

[52] CO 1015/2489 - *Aden Colony and Aden Protectorate: Review of Affairs*, Governor of Aden to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 March 1961

[53] PRO CO 1015/2393/29 - *Johnston's recommendations on constitutional future of Aden Colony and Protectorate*, 3 March 1961

Ministers[54]. Overriding all this, obviously, was the need to retain special privileges for the British base:

> "Our ultimate aim should be, whilst maintaining our essential strategic facilities in Aden, to establish in Southern Arabia an independent and prosperous Arab state in relations of friendly partnership with ourselves"[55].

Johnston's view that a merger was desirable was not shared by everybody, either in London or in Aden. Julian Amery (Secretary of State for Air) believed that British defence interests were best safeguarded by retaining sovereignty and keeping the Colony and Federation apart[56]. This opinion was true from a British point of view, but would inevitably have lead to the loss of support of all groups in Aden, including the moderates who were willing to work with the Government to achieve independence. Despite the fear of losing sovereignty, Iain Macleod (Colonial Secretary) visited Aden in April 1961, met both the Federal Council and Colony Ministers, had discussions with Johnston, and decided that merger was the best course to take[57]. Therefore, after some early opposition, and despite the differences of the two sides, Her Majesty's Government decided to set in motion the process whereby Aden would accede to the Federation to form a unitary state in South Arabia friendly to Great Britain, an aim which ultimately failed.

Merger Talks

Once Macleod had approved Johnston's course of action, the Federal Ministers were invited to London in June 1961 for talks with the Secretary of State, and were then joined by the Colony Ministers and the Governor[58]. By this time the Chiefs of Staff had stated they had no objection to a measure of self-government and the merger as long as the British Government retained responsibility for defence, external affairs and internal

---

[54] Johnston - *op. cit.*, pp. 36-9
[55] PRO CO 1015/2393/29 - *op. cit.*
[56] PRO CO 1015/2392/45 - *Letter from Amery to Iain Macleod*, 30 March 1961
[57] Johnston - *op. cit.*, p. 65
[58] *ibid.*, p. 65

security[59]. This meant there was a broad consensus among British policy-makers towards merger, but there was still the problem of implementing constitutional advance and the merger without upsetting both parties. Johnston recommended that "it would be better at this stage to avoid telling either party that we regard constitutional advance in the Colony as a first step to our goal"[60]. This was sensible advice as it would allow discussions to start, but could have been dangerous as there was plenty of potential for upsetting the Federal Ministers. Johnston did warn of the probable adverse Federal reaction when Macleod recommended telling the rulers about constitutional advance, as he believed they would feel that "Her Majesty's Government and I myself have 'ganged up' behind their backs to betray their interests"[61]. Therefore, Johnston felt it would be better to involve them in discussions with the Colonial Office and the Adeni Ministers first. This had the potential to backfire, but fortunately for Johnston this did not happen as the Federal Ministers were eventually mollified by the certainty of merger and the need for limited constitutional advance.

The other serious problem was the question of when to hold the elections for a new Legislative Council, as the constitution provided for this by January 1963, leaving little time to bring about the merger. The Foreign Office correctly pointed out that to delay the elections for too long would "subject the Colony Ministers over a long period to what will probably be a growing campaign of hostile propaganda from the U.A.R. and other outside sources"[62]. They recommended revising the franchise and holding elections sooner rather than later. However, this would have seriously upset the Federal Ministers who the British were very keen to keep content as they were the British Government's best chance of retaining the use of the base. This belief dominated British thinking until shortly before the actual withdrawal, despite the growing strength of the Nationalist groups and the inability of the Federation to fight back. Nevertheless, the colonial authorities never attempted to reach an accommodation with the opposition until it was too late.

---

[59] PRO CO 1015/2387/76 - *Ministry of Defence to Melville*, 10 May 1961
[60] PRO CO 1015/2386/24 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 20 May 1961
[61] PRO CO 1015/2386/27 - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 26 May 1961
[62] PRO CO 1015/2387/91 - *Foreign Office to Watt (CO)*, 24 May 1961

The need to support the Federal Ministers and bolster the Federation was a popular idea among those that had actually worked in South Arabia. William Luce (then Political Resident in the Gulf) "was not pessimistic of our ability to retain almost indefinitely a secure military position in Aden" but the British Government had to back the Protectorate rulers or see the opposition grow in influence. Moreover, to grant constitutional advance would let the young Nasserites enter the political field, thereby forcing the moderates to be more radical. For these reasons, Luce believed the Colony should have been turned into a Protectorate and merged with the Federation under Britain's traditional allies, the Federal Ministers[63]. This kind of thinking had a certain logic, as the Federal rulers were the most likely to back a continued British presence, but were only able to do this if the Federation was built up into a strong institution with the ability to deal with the opposition, as opposed to over-dependent on the British Government for survival.

Ultimately, Macleod took the risky decision to extend the life of the Legislative Council to enable enough time to discuss the merger plans and implement Aden's accession into the Federation. There were to be slight amendments to the constitution before that, such as replacing the Executive Council with a Council of Ministers responsible for most civil departments of the Aden Government[64]. By delaying the elections, however, the British Government were leaving both themselves and their moderate allies in the Colony wide open to hostile propaganda from the opposition. The reason given for the delay was that,

> "The true wishes of the Aden population are much more likely to be satisfactorily ascertained by an election after a period during which the benefits or possible disadvantages of the union can be appreciated"[65].

This, in reality, was a fudge as the real reason was fear that the elections would bring to power the Nationalists who would have opposed a merger with the Federation. Moreover, "Her Majesty's Government are anxious to avoid giving the impression that

---

[63] PRO DEFE 11/421/17 - *Record of Meeting between Luce and COS*, May 1961
[64] PRO CO 1015/2386/29 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston*, 5 June 1961
[65] PRO CO 1015/2388/184 - *Foreign Office Guidance Telegram No. 329*, 17 Aug. 1961

they regard the merger as a step to early independence", again providing potential ammunition to opponents of continued colonial rule in Aden[66].

The discussions in London started on 19 June 1961 between members of the Colonial Office and the Federal delegation comprising Sharif Hussain of Beihan, the Sultan of Lahej, the Audhali Sultan, the Fadhli Naib and Muhammad Farid[67]. The Federal Supreme Council had already warned they would view the grant of self-determination to Aden as a serious threat, "We believe it would be in your interest to see Aden incorporated in the Federation and controlled by your old and loyal friends"[68]. In other words, the Federal Rulers were of the opinion that only they could guarantee continued British defence rights. This was brought up again in the first meeting between the delegates and the Colonial Office where Macleod declared British policy as being a union between the Colony and Federation, subject to the retention of strategic facilities in Aden. The Colonial Secretary reassured the Sharif that "there was no thought of giving the Colony independence or full self-government"[69]. However, the issue of constitutional advance was one the British could not back out of, and the Colonial Secretary informed the delegates that it was practical politics to grant a measure of advance before the union, albeit "a long way short of the kind of advance which the Delegation feared"[70]. Again, the rulers expressed their unease with such a plan since "if the Federal Government agreed to constitutional advance and the Colony leaders then declined to proceed with union, the Federal Government's position would be grave"[71].

The delegation did finally reluctantly accept that some form of advance would have to take place before the merger[72]. Nevertheless, it was an issue that the British Government wanted to avoid discussion about during the talks with both the Federal and Colony delegations in July, the first priority being achieving an agreement to

---

[66] PRO CO 1015/2386/32 - *Letter Watt to Johnston*, 9 June 1961
[67] PRO CO 1015/2386/35 - *Departmental Brief on Aden Federation Delegation*, 14 June 1961
[68] *ibid.*, Annex A, Telegram from Supreme Council to Secretary of State, 14 June 1961
[69] PRO CO 1015/2387/117 - *Record of First Meeting with Federal Delegation*, 19 June 1961
[70] PRO CO 1015/2387/120 - *Record of Second Meeting with the Federal Delegation*, 20 June 1961
[71] *ibid.*
[72] PRO CO 1015.2387/128 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston*, 23 June 1961

further talks about merger in Aden[73]. The two delegations did agree in a programme designed to bring about the merger during their talks with the Colonial Office, and also to further talks back in Aden to reach agreement on the constitutional, administrative and financial conditions of the union[74]. In other words, the idea of a merger was agreed upon, but the actual details were far from being finalised, and the discussions to achieve this were long and difficult. This was partly caused, according to Johnston, by the splits in the Colony delegation. The Governor contrasted "the wise and forbearing attitude" shown by the Federal Ministers with the "unhappy and divided" Adeni Ministers[75]. Support for the merger came from Bayumi and Basendwah but they were initially outnumbered by Sa'idi, Ali Salem Ali and Joshi who "regretted having committed themselves, in the London Agreement, to anything more than unconditional constitutional advance"[76]. The situation was reversed by the resignation of Ali Salem Ali and his replacement by Husseiny, a pro-Bayumi moderate, but Johnston still warned of the "grave need for accelerated progress on it (the constitutional exercise) in 1962"[77].

In order to reach some form of progress, Johnston set up working parties among the delegates to deliberate individual aspects of the merger, a scheme which had some success, and at least broke the stalemate in the wider talks[78]. However, the main impetus to an agreement between the delegations came from Bayumi who changed his mind over the order of implementing the merger. Previously the Adeni Minister had preferred constitutional advance, followed by elections on the new franchise, and then merger with the Federation, whereas during the talks Bayumi proposed the merger should come before the elections[79]. Johnston was opposed to this policy and believed the elections should come first, followed by the constitutional advance, and then the merger, because if the Nationalists won the merger, then Britain could delay the advance. However, if the elections occurred afterwards and the Nationalists won, then

---

[73] PRO CO 1015/2387/139 - *Brief for Secretary of State for the Colonies on Aden Federation and Colony Delegations*, July 1961
[74] PRO CO 1015/2387/144&/148 - *Record of First and Second Meetings between Delegations and Melville*, 5 & 6 July 1961
[75] PRO CO 1015/2489 - *Aden Colony and Protectorate: Review of Affairs*, op. cit.
[76] *ibid.*
[77] *ibid.*
[78] PRO CO 1015/2387/173 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 30 Aug. 1961
[79] PRO CO 1015/2388/175 - *Letter from Johnston to Watt*, 31 Aug. 1961

the British position would come in for increasing criticism from the elected Legislative Council[80]. The Federal rulers, though, were in favour of Bayumi's "shot-gun wedding" approach and a deal was made between the two[81]. The Colonial Office opposed this approach as they would have preferred early elections on a new franchise which limited the Nationalist vote[82]. The situation was changed by Johnston's volte face as he outlined the three possible courses open to the British Government, which were to allow the talks to break down and have elections in early 1963, which would be disastrous, or put the talks on hold and hold elections on a revised franchise, which would take 12-18 months, or pursue the Bayumi-Federal "shot-gun wedding"[83]. Johnston favoured the last option because Nasser was, allegedly, in decline, there was increased support for Bayumi in the Colony, and if Britain did not back the moderates and Federal rulers then they would alienate their closest allies. The Colonial Office were not initially convinced by the Governor's arguments, especially as Johnston himself,

> "recognises that his plan is open to criticism on the grounds that it largely ignores democratic principles of consent, but argues that, particularly when we are dealing with Arabs and when we have H.M.G.'s own defence interests to defend, we need not be too scrupulous about this"[84].

Moreover, the proposals were based on short-term consideration since Nasser could still have caused problems, the strength of Bayumi's support was questionable, and elections had to be held by January 1963 which would have been too early a test for the merger. The Colonial Secretary also had reservations since the achievement of internal self-government in the Colony followed by the merger would leave the Arabs nothing to look for but independence, which was certainly not a goal the British were keen to foster[85].

---

[80] *ibid.*
[81] PRO CO 1015/2388/188 - *Acting Governor to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 20 Sep. 1961, the alliance between the Luqman faction and the ATUC also prompted the deal
[82] PRO CO 1015/2388/re: 189 - *Minute from Formoy to Melville*, 22 Sep. 1961
[83] PRO CO 1015/2388/193 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 4 Oct. 1961
[84] PRO CO 1015/2388/re: 193-6 - *Minute from Watt to Martin*, 6 Oct. 1961
[85] PRO CO 1015/2388/197 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Johnston*, 6 Oct. 1961

The Aden Department of the Colonial Office voiced its concerns that Johnston was proposing "to take advantage of what may be a temporary situation, and please what may be a very narrow circle of our friends" and advised against accepting the proposal[86]. This was supported by the Ministry of Defence who were worried about the shortening of time to use the base as freely as they wanted, the Treasury had doubts, and the Foreign Office warned not to discount the appeal of Nasser and criticism from other Arab states, all of which was supported by the Colonial Office, who also did not believe that Bayumi was strong enough to carry out the plan[87]. The reasons for opposing the plan had little to do with the lack of elections to approve of the merger, since "we need not be surprised that Mr. Bayumi and some others are disposed to turn a blind eye to democratic and Parliamentary practices; so are we" [88]. The opposition to the plan had more to do with the belief that once the merger took place the pressure for independence would be stepped up. However, despite the doubts, Maudling (who had taken over as Colonial Secretary in October) approved Johnston's plan to support the "shot-gun wedding" towards the end of 1961[89]. There continued, though, to be opposition both from within his own department and the Foreign Office. The latter's opposition stemmed from the view that an early merger might lead to pressure for independence which would mean putting British defence rights on a treaty basis. This was a development which would have had to be resisted from a defence point of view, but could have lost the support of the moderates and produced an irresistible move towards the secession of the Colony[90]. J.C. Morgan at the Colonial Office also believed that after an early merger the elections could well put the Nationalists in power, which could have meant the use of force to maintain British control of the base in the face of local opposition[91].

The decision to follow Bayumi's scheme involved an extension to the life of the Aden Legislative Council, an announcement which Johnston favoured making as early as

---

[86] PRO CO 1015/2388/206 - *Future Policy*, Aden Dept. submission to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 20 Oct. 1961
[87] *ibid.*
[88] PRO CO 1015/2388/re: 198-201 - *Minute from Watt to Martin*, 13 Oct. 1961
[89] PRO CO 1015/2388/221 - *Secretary of State to Johnston*, 30 Nov. 1961
[90] PRO CO 1015/2388/220 - *Letter from R.S. Crawford (FO) to H.T. Bourdillon (CO)*, 4 Dec. 1961
[91] PRO CO 1015/2388/re: 221B *Minute from Morgan to Watt*, 8 Dec. 1961

possible since "there would be serious political disadvantages about either a last-minute prolongation or a prolongation in isolation, and not in the context of constitutional advance"[92]. However, there was considerable delay in making the announcement, partly because of opposition within the Legislative Council, and partly because of uncertainty in Whitehall. The Governor was allowed to make a statement on 22nd January declaring the merger was the best possible way of retaining the British position in Aden, but there were few details given[93]. The other major problem was the delay in reaching an agreement, since the original deadline of October 1961 had long since passed, although there were some in the Colonial Office who preferred to let things proceed at "the slowest natural pace" since to speed the process up, in their minds, was to speed up the end of British sovereignty[94]. However, the two sides did eventually start to agree on the actual details of the merger in May 1962, and the British Government did succeed in retaining sovereignty over the Colony.

Johnston had warned the Federal Supreme Council in April that continued delay would have enabled the opposition to the merger to organise, disappointed those hoping for political advancement and pleased the extremists[95]. This seemed to have the desired effect as the "delicate question of Aden's participation in the Federal Cabinet and Federal Assembly was settled by the Ministers at an informal meeting"[96]. The settlement allocated 24 members to Aden in the Federal Council and 4 Ministers in the Supreme Council[97]. On the other issues, the Federation was to have exclusive authority over education, health, customs, public works, communications and a number of lesser subjects whilst internal security in Aden was to remain a state subject, important from a British point of view to defend the base[98]. Moreover, "the accession of the State of Aden to the Federation shall not in any way affect the sovereignty of Her Majesty in and over the State"[99]. It was also to be understood that,

---

[92] PRO CO 1015/2389/231 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 1 Jan. 1962
[93] PRO FO 371/162784/B1051/3B - *CO to Kenya and Zanzibar*, 19 Jan. 1962
[94] PRO CO 1015/2389/re: 251 - *Minute from Formoy to Morgan*, 9 Feb. 1962
[95] PRO CO 1015/2401/E22 - *Meeting between Governor and Federal Supreme Council*, 28 April 1962
[96] Johnston - *op. cit.*, p. 102
[97] PRO CO 1015/2394/25A - *Letter from Attorney-General in Aden to J.C. McPetrie (Legal Dept., CO)*, 25 May 1962
[98] Johnston - *op. cit.*, p. 102
[99] PRO CO 1015/2389/303 - *Exchange of Notes from Chairman of the Supreme Council to the Governor of Aden*, 30 May 1962

> "Her Majesty's Government ... could at any time resume (either permanently or for a limited period) any or all of the powers exercisable in respect of the State of Aden under the Constitution of the Federation"[100].

These two points meant that Britain would retain sovereignty over Aden, and could, if necessary, enact emergency powers to ensure continued defence rights and use of the base, important clauses and necessary from a defence point of view.

Aden Joins the Federation

The agreement between the Federal and Adeni delegations meant the merger process could continue, but this was only provisional and the conditions of the agreement still had to be approved by the British, which entailed further discussions in London in July 1962. The main points requiring the Government's approval were on the conditions of Aden's withdrawal from the Federation, the arrangements for the Aden staff pool, the provision of funds by the British Government for compensation of loss of customs revenue, the form of constitutional advance in Aden, and the timing and procedure of the merger[101]. However, the prime reason behind the final discussions in London were to remove "the various suspicions which the Colony and Federal Ministers have of one another", and to ensure the merger went through as smoothly as possible[102]. British policy, however, was not unduly concerned with the fine print of the merger since "the British Government's policy in Aden is based solely on the need to retain the military base for an indefinite period", and a merger was seen as the best method to achieve this[103]. Moreover, there was also a belief that to achieve the aims of the policy, there was a need to keep both delegations happy, as one main object of the merger,

---

[100] *ibid.*
[101] PRO FO 371/162787/B1051/33 - *Aden: Talks on Merger of Federation and Colony*, Main brief for handling the talks by East African Dept. 'B', July 1962
[102] *ibid.*
[103] *ibid.*

> "is to make the most favourable use of the friendly intentions towards ourselves of the present Rulers of the Federation and of the present Ministry in the Colony, both of whom are in favour of merger"[104].

Therefore, the push towards a merger was not out of interest for the well-being and future stability and strength of South Arabia, but out of self-interest.

Be that as it may, an agreement was reached on all the major points, including constitutional advance in Aden, and the "blessing" of the Secretary of State for the Colonies was given. The British Government accepted the need to pay customs compensation to the Federation, a compromise was reached over Aden's right to secede whereby it could either withdraw in the first year or after six years, the life of the Legislative Council was to be extended to January 1964 and the British Government's right to exclude or withdraw any areas necessary for defence purposes was admitted[105]. The most difficult question had been the form of constitutional advance, with the Federal Ministers still wanting the advance to be conditional on the Colony agreeing to merger, whilst Joshi, Husseiny and Saffi on the Aden delegation felt it would be wrong if the merger took place without some form of free choice by the population. The compromise that was reached meant that four new members were elected to the Council before the merger, to sit beside the four ex officio members that they were to replace, and the election would be postponed for a year. There were other lesser issues, including the new name of the Federation of South Arabia, and re-titling the Governor as High Commissioner, but the primary issue was to prove to be the constitutional advance and the postponing of the elections was to be the opposition's main focus for attack.

The agreement was published in both London and Aden on 20 August 1962 and represented eighteen months of stalemates and deadlocks with last-minute compromises on the more politically sensitive issues[106]. However, the battle was far from over as

---

[104] *ibid.*
[105] PRO DEFE 11/332/1522 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony and Protectorate during 1962*, High Commissioner for Aden and the Protectorate of South Arabia to the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 23 March 1963
[106] *ibid.*

regards having the agreement accepted in Aden, with the debate in the Legislative Council still to take place. There was considerable opposition to the merger within the Colony, largely driven by the ATUC who organised a series of strikes and demonstrations, but also from within the 'moderate' groups, in particular Luqman's People's Constitutional Congress (see below). Those in support included Bayumi's United National Party, "by conservative opinion generally" (in other words those with a vested interest in the continuation of the British presence) and most of the merchant class. Johnston claimed that "our enquiries at the time indicated that a clear majority of the Adenis were in favour of merger, or disposed to acquiesce in it", a claim that was hard to either prove or disprove, but given that the ATUC's support was largely from the Protectorate and Yemeni Arabs, then it could well have had some truth. However, even though a majority of Adenis might well have been in favour, tension still grew within the Colony during September in the build up to the debate and election within the Legislative Council. The ATUC's actions not only included demonstrations, but also, according to Johnston, intimidation and threats towards members of the Legislative Council and their families which was endangering the Government's majority[107]. When the debate finally started on 24th September, a nearly complete general strike took place, accompanied by noisy demonstrations in the Crater area of Aden where the Legislative Council building was sited. This almost succeeded in postponing the vote, but Johnston and Bayumi were able to persuade the Council to continue, and the vote finally took place on September 26th. Hasson's amendment opposing Bayumi's motion of support was defeated by 16 to 7, although this was only 9 to 7 in terms of local members, and 7 to 5 of elected members. The Opposition then walked out of the proceedings and Bayumi's motion was passed unanimously by the remaining 15 members (one of the Government supporters also having walked out in disgust at the actions of the Opposition). However, it had been a very close shave for both Bayumi and Her Majesty's Government's desired policy in Aden.

The vote, in fact, was a narrow escape for the British and their allies since the following day the revolution occurred in the Yemen and the Imam was overthrown. Johnston believed that,

---

[107] *ibid.*

> "If the Yemeni revolution had come one day earlier, I (Johnston) feel pretty certain that the merger plan would never have obtained the support of a majority of local members in the Legislative Council"[108].

However, for the moment, the British had got what they believed was best for retaining control of Aden and the base, and with the Federal Council approving the merger on 27th September and the House of Commons on 13th November, Johnston was able to proceed with the elections for the four new seats on the Legislative Council. These took place in December, and were won by four representatives in favour of the merger, despite another boycott by the Opposition. This left the way clear for the merger to take place without further problems, and the treaty for Aden's accession to the Federation was signed on 16th January, with the day of the merger being 18th January when the amended Federal Constitution took effect. This was by no means the end of the problems facing the British in Aden, especially as elections for the new Legislative Council had to take place by January 1964. Moreover, as Johnston warned, Bayumi would have to keep up with "the nationalist Jones's" if he was to stay in power, and the British Government would have to spend more money in South Arabia. According to the Governor/High Commissioner, given the lack of substantial financial assistance given before the merger proposals were debated "in the circumstance it is remarkable that the Legislative Council voted the right way"[109].

The Rise of Nationalism

The 'Moderates'

The members of the Legislative Council who debated the merger proposal in September 1962 were, for the most part, former members of the Aden Association, the dominant

[108] *ibid.*
[109] *ibid.*

legitimate political party in the Colony whose representatives had won the vast majority of the votes in the 1955 and 1959 elections (see above, Chapter 3). However, the AA was not a cohesive group, and by the end of the 1950s, the party was splitting into smaller units, nominally over the issue of merger with the Federation, but also along personality lines. The two main parties to emerge from the split were Hassan Ali Bayumi's United National Party (UNP), and Mohammad Luqman's People's Constitutional Congress (PCC), both formed in late 1960, and neither to last beyond the end of British rule[110].

The two parties were not so much divided over the actual merger, more over the process and the terms of Aden's accession to the Federation. This can be seen by Luqman telling the Colonial Secretary in 1959 that he hoped the Colony would join the Federation[111]. However, in the merger debate of 1962, the PCC leader voted against Aden's accession, and Johnston commented that,

> "as for the Luqman family, it was common knowledge that their opposition to merger was not based on principle, but on personal dislike of Bayumi and some of his Ministers; if a Luqman-controlled Government had been formed instead, the general belief in Aden was that it would have carried out merger with gusto"[112].

This was possibly true, but the PCC was still the dominant Opposition group within the Legislative Council, and therefore able to rally enough support to come within one local member of defeating the merger process.

Neither Luce nor Johnston had a particularly high view of the Colony politicians, and both complained of the lack of an effective moderate party to counter the appeal of the ATUC and, to a lesser extent by 1959/60, the SAL. Luce reported that if a member of the Legislative Council was not a Member in Charge of a Government department, then they tended to automatically view themselves as in opposition, despite many of them sharing the same political ideas. Therefore he saw the need for the formation of a

---

[110] Lackner, Helen - *op. cit.*, p. 28
[111] PRO CO 1015/1910/39 - *note of a meeting between the Secretary of State for the Colonies and Members of the Aden Legislative Council*, 12 Feb. 1959
[112] PRO DEFE 11/332/1522 - *op. cit.*

moderate political party to rival the Nationalists, an idea which Kirkman of the Colonial Office opposed since,

> "While I would go part of the way with the Governor on the need for a political party as a counter to the T.U.C. approach to mob politics, I see dangers in pressing the middle classes of all communities to define their needs and objectives since this is almost certain to lead to a crystallisation on a racial basis on the present emotional atmosphere of Arab Nationalism"[113].

Luce, was aware of this danger, but believed it was better than allowing the ATUC to be the only organised body to contest the next elections. However, Luce was also very disparaging of the local politicians, and was not optimistic about the construction of "sound and permanent democratic institutions" since,

> "with the possible exception of Hasson Bayumi, ... they (the Executive Council) and the Legislative Councillors are mediocre men, and indeed mediocrity is the hall-mark of Adenese generally"[114].

The Governor believed that the main interest of the leading Adenis was commerce and trade, which meant there was a lack of "intelligent, public-spirited men" to lead the Colony politically.

This highly critical view was shared by Luce's successor, Johnston, again with the sole exception being Bayumi, a man that the new Governor felt the British could really work with. Johnston arrived in Aden in September 1960, at which time local politics were recovering from the period of near-continuous strikes by the ATUC in 1959 which had been ended by the Industrial Relations Ordinance (see below). The main issue was future constitutional development, but as Johnston commented "there were nearly as many ideas on this subject as there are individuals to voice them"[115]. He also bemoaned the factional nature of Arab politics which meant the moderates were divided among themselves, so Bayumi's UNP was not as strong as it could have been because other smaller parties were in the process of forming themselves. In the Governor's

[113] PRO CO 1015/2489/4 - *op. cit.*
[114] *ibid.*
[115] *ibid.*

view, all the moderate groups had three main aims: Aden for the Adenese; a constitutional advance giving substantial self-government before the end of the Legislative Council then in operation; and some sort of merger with the Protectorate/Federation. However, instead of pursuing these aims, "they are now sitting back and waiting on Government" to offer some proposals[116].

As noted above, the Colony politicians were generally in favour of a merger, but wanted a constitutional advance before this. Some of the Legislative Council members, in particular Hasson, wanted more than this and agitated for full independence soon. According to him,

> "if the British Government wished to keep in the good books of the future government of Aden the British Government should grant independence immediately; the present political leaders in the Colony wanted the existing arrangements to continue merely in order to safeguard their own personal position"[117].

This was an opinion which the British were never likely to follow given the probable outpouring of anti-colonial feeling that would follow such a move. As it was the majority of the Legislative Council were content to work with the British within the colonial administration, and gradually achieve their aims. This did not mean, though, that they were merely approving what the Governor told them , as the differences with the Federation proved. The Colony politicians were worried that the wealth of Aden would finance the Federation, and if the Federal rulers controlled the town, then they could disrupt the merchant lifestyle and halt the move towards self-government. The Federation, meanwhile, were concerned that the Colony was a breeding ground for Nationalist opposition to their traditional rule. The gap between the two sides, the politically sophisticated Adenis and the 'backward' Rulers, was so wide that mutual understanding was unlikely. The British, however, realised that if the Colony moderates did not receive the constitutional advance they both desired, and had been

---

[116] *ibid.*
[117] PRO CO 1015/2386/17 - *Minutes of Afternoon Meeting between Secretary of State, Governor and senior officials of Colony and Protectorate*, 4 April 1961

promised, then they would move to a more extreme position, threatening the British tenure of the base:

> "The expectation of further self-government is widespread and could not be thwarted without a serious risk that the moderates, disappointed would be unable to sustain their position against the Nationalists. Indeed some of them might throw in their lot with the Nationalists"[118].

Indeed, this was to be the case in the last few years of British rule, as certain Legislative Council members, such as Maqawi, moved towards a more Nationalist position as it became clear which way the tide was turning in Adeni politics.

During the merger talks between the Colony and Federal delegates, the opposition in the Legislative Council initially based their stance on the lack of their representatives at the discussions. A telegram from nine members of the Council was sent to the Secretary of State during the first London conference in June/July 1961 protesting against the talks that were ignoring their opinion[119]. Included in the nine signatories were two future members of the Aden delegation, Husseiny and Saffi, which suggests that Johnston's view of the opposition being the opposition purely because of personality differences was true. Their stance was to change to one of elections first, and then talks on merger as the discussions continued (as opposed to Bayoumi's "shot-gun wedding"), which was to be the main basis for opposing the talks from then on[120]. The PCC, with some justification, claimed it would have been "absolutely undemocratic" for the British to impose a system of government on the Colony without first consulting the people of Aden, and supported Sa'idi's stand against the merger agreement[121]. However, by that point the pro-merger delegates outnumbered the opponents, making life easier for both Bayumi and the British.

---

[118] PRO CO 1015/2387/72 - *Colonial Policy Committee*, 3 May 1961
[119] PRO CO 1015/2516/6 - *Telegram from Legislative Council to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 3 July 1961
[120] PRO CO 1015/2401/E/4 - *Memo to Governor of Aden*, 22 Aug. 1961 - a petition signed by Shihab, Saffi, Maqawi, Hasson and Mulhi
[121] PRO CO 1015/2405/47 - *Letter from People's Congress to the Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 14 May 1962

Ultimately, Bayumi and his supporters won the Legislative Council debate, and the UNP continued to be the main legitimate Adeni political party with its leader becoming Chief Minister for Aden, and a member of the Federal Supreme Council. However, the divisions among the moderates remained, and even combined, they were hardly representative of the population of the Colony in the early 1960s given that the elections of 1959 had only had a turnout of 27% of a limited electorate. The moderates did benefit from their willingness to work with the colonial authorities since they received a certain amount of power and were able to preserve their own positions and interests as heads of the traditional merchant and commercial families in Aden. However, their link to the British was also a handicap and provided much useful propaganda to the Nationalists, who were still largely based around the trades unions which gave them access to the politically unrepresented working classes in the Colony.

The ATUC/PSP

The trade union movement in Aden had successfully campaigned for better working conditions during the 1950s. However, much to the mounting concern of the British authorities, the ATUC under Abdullah al Asnag's leadership was increasingly seen to use its ability to organise industrial action for political ends. The first example of this had been in 1956 with the demonstration in favour of Nasser during the Suez crisis, and by 1959 the unions, under the control of the ATUC, were causing increasing problems for the companies and industries in the Colony, as well as for the colonial authorities. During 1959 alone there were 84 strikes. The most affected industries were the port which was paralysed for 48 days and the oil refinery which suffered 34 days of strikes[122]. Moreover, there was no agreement reached between the unions and employers. The situation, according to Luce, was getting unbearable, and action was deemed necessary to limit the number of strikes and industrial action, and thereby the amount of Nationalist activity disrupting the business of the port and refinery, as well as British policy.

[122] Kostiner, Joseph - *op. cit.*, p. 45

Luce had hoped that the internal struggle in the ATUC during 1959 would deflect the unions actions and ability to bring industrial activity to a halt. However, with the defeat of the SAL faction in August, the ATUC had continued its series of debilitating strikes towards the end of the year. Once again, the British organised an examination of the causes behind the strikes, this time by a Mr. Parry, who visited Aden in December 1960. In his report, Parry noted that "the dominant factor which influenced them (the trade unions) was the undesirability of British rule in Aden, and that the most effective way to get rid of it was to cause industrial unrest"[123]. However, it seemed that al Asnag was not in total control of all the unions. The BP and Refinery Unions in particular, as well as the Forces Union, did not fully support the ATUC leadership, and the BP strike was ended against the Secretary-General's wishes. Parry was not very impressed with Abdullah al Asnag and, unlike Luce, did not view him as a moderating influence, rather he was "a fanatical Arab nationalist who has used, and will continue to use, the trade unions in Aden to further his rabid political aims"[124]. The main concern of Parry was that the situation would explode into open conflict, and action would have to be taken to encourage those opposed to al Asnag within the ATUC to put industrial interests before Arab nationalism.

The Governor's first action after Parry's visit was to appoint a Special Adviser on Industrial Relations in January 1960 as "at no time since trade unions and employers' organisations were established in Aden have so many disputes and stoppages of work taken place"[125]. The Special Adviser, though, was unable to obtain the co-operation of the ATUC whilst, at around the same time, the ATUC was applying for affiliation to the International Confederation of Arab Trade Unions (ICATU) in Cairo. This would, Luce believed, increase the political nature of the Aden trade unions and provide a more direct channel for UAR influence and subversion within the labour movement[126]. The political aims of al Asnag and the unions were underlined by his speech at an ATUC meeting in February 1960, a speech which clearly set out his opposition to British rule:

---

[123] PRO CO 1015/2566/45 - *Note of a Visit by Mr. Parry to Aden in December 1959*, 27 Jan. 1960
[124] *ibid.*
[125] PRO CO 1015/2566/16 - *Draft Statement*, Jan. 1960
[126] PRO CO 1015/2566/24 - *Luce to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 13 Jan. 1960

> "A nationalist programme will be carried out to strengthen your belief in a united Yemen - one Nation, one Yemen and one struggle only. No North, no South, but one Yemen. No Legislative Council, no Federation. We do not recognise them. We are one nation whether we are in Taiz, Aden, Yafai or elsewhere. There is only one Yemen, the occupied part of which should be liberated"[127].

Further confirmation of British fears for the unions ability to cause them trouble was in the booklet published by al Asnag, 'Our Labour Movement' which attacked the British base and the Federation[128]. The booklet also stated the ATUC's intention to continue its, according to the British, "political machinations" with the help of the UAR[129]. To counter these "political machinations", the Aden Legislative Council enacted the Industrial Relations (Conciliation and Arbitration) Ordinance on 17th August 1960, which was an initially successful attempt to limit industrial action in the Colony:

> "The new legislation has moreover relieved the Colony for the time being of continued industrial dislocation caused by A.T.U.C.'s exploitation of the strike weapon as a means of acquiring power and prestige, and of creating discontent from which it could derive a political bonus"[130].

The Ordinance banned strikes and introduced compulsory arbitration in industrial disputes, which meant the unions had to negotiate with employers rather than use the strike weapon, which in turn greatly reduced the amount of industrial action in Aden in the early 1960s. The ATUC denounced the Ordinance as "Bayoumi's law" and intensified their campaign against the Minister for Labour whom they referred to as "more imperialist than the British ... Our women are more intelligent than he is"[131].

Despite the legislation, the ATUC leadership was still powerful, and maintained a strong hold over the unions, a situation which was somewhat surprisingly consolidated by the introduction of the Ordinance. The Industrial Relations Ordinance forced the ATUC into reorganising in order to keep up the pressure on the British and the employers, and the main beneficiary of the reorganisation was the leadership.

---

[127] *Paper on Aden trade Union Congress* - Trevaskis Papers, Part I: MSS Brit. Emp. s367, Box 3, File 3
[128] PRO CO 1015/2567/180 - *Aden Intelligence Summary*, July 1960
[129] *ibid.*
[130] PRO CO 1015/2567/184 - *Letter from Luce to Melville (CO)*, 14 Sep. 1960
[131] *Paper on Aden Trade Union Congress* - Trevaskis Papers, *op. cit.*

Individual unions were organised into larger associations or federations, of which there were eight created in 1960, each with a secretary and between two and four representatives in the ATUC's consultative assembly (the body which annually elected the nine-member executive council) [132]. Moreover, the central leadership was given control of over half of each unions' funds, and through the new associations was able to curb the powers of individual unions. This centralisation benefited al Asnag, giving him and his supporters greater control over the ATUC, as well as increased funds, and meant there was continued use of industrial action for political ends. The constitution of the ATUC emphasised this point with its list of aims including to represent labourers, supervise the labour movement, end unemployment and illiteracy, secure freedoms of opinion and so forth The other aims, however, included "to struggle for the realisation of complete Arab Unity and to put down the weak, forged regimes" and "To maintain positive neutrality, To denounce foreign military bases in the Arab fatherland"[133]. However, as strikes were illegal without arbitration first, the ATUC's ability to achieve their political aims was limited at first. This was eventually overcome by the formation of their own political party, the People's Socialist Party (PSP) in July 1962.

The ATUC did test the attitude of the Aden Government with strikes by the Transport and General Workers Union in October 1961 and by the BP (Refinery) Union in December of the same year, but both unions met with sharp sentences. The individual unions could have achieved exemption from the Ordinance by accepting its validity, but the ATUC refused to recognise the Ordinance, the Legislative Council and the Ministerial system, which therefore prevented the unions from legally striking[134]. To achieve their political aims, therefore, the leaders of the ATUC established a political organisation, the PSP, in 1962. The announcement came from Muhammad Salim 'Ali 'Abdu, the head of the ATUC's political department (which had been established in

---

[132] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 46 & Watt, D.C. - 'Labor Relations and Trades Unionism in Aden, 1952-1960', in *The Middle East Journal*, Vol. 16, no. 4, Autumn 1962, pp. 443-50 - the eight were for oil workers, port and export, governmental and municipal, industrial, teachers, civilian defence employees, private business and bank employees, restaurant and entertainment

[133] PRO CO 1015/2567/E220 - *Constitution of 'The Labour Congress, Aden'*, Oct. 1960 - the organisation was also renamed the Aden Labour Congress (ALC), but continued to be referred to as the ATUC

[134] PRO CO 1015/2489 - *Aden Colony and Aden Protectorate: Review of Affairs during 1961*

1959), and the new party's first action was to call a general strike on 23rd July for political purposes, not industrial, as both 'Abdu and Said Hasson Suhbi (head of the PSP's research department) were keen to point out[135]. The PSP was formed during the nationalist campaign against the Federation, and its aims and principles "echoed faithfully" those of the ATUC, the main exception being the link to the UAR, which the PSP Constitution does not mention, but was explicitly proposed in the ATUC's policy statement in 1959[136]. The membership of the PSP also mirrored the ATUC, with the membership of the party's Supreme Council and the Heads of the five departments all being prominent in the unions, the only exceptions being four professionals who were probably included to give the party an air of respectability[137].

The merger process was a key issue for the Nationalists, but also gave rise to a policy problem as they had long been campaigning for a united Yemen, including Aden, the Protectorate, and North Yemen. The merger, therefore, could have been viewed as step towards that aim. However, as it was organised by the British and the Federal rulers, it was opposed. The principles of the party not only stated that "the natural Yemen" was part of the Arab nation, but also to liberate that area from the "imperialists and reactionaries", unifying it on the basis of democracy and socialism"[138]. This meant that the merger could be opposed on grounds of lack of democracy, which was a justifiable accusation given the nature of the "shotgun wedding". The PSP called for elections before the merger and warned, after Bayumi had won the Legislative Council vote, that,

> "Our party in declaring non-recognition (of the Legislative Council resolution) reaffirms such undemocratic measures may oblige people to resort to undesirable steps leading to serious consequences at British Government responsibility"[139].

The PSP was defeated and the merger went ahead on British terms, but their opposition campaign, including alleged intimidation of Legislative Council members, endangered the Government majority. Had one Government supporter voted in favour of Hasson's

---

[135] PRO CO 1055/154/1 - *C.I.O Paper on the People's Socialist Party*, 17 Aug. 1962
[136] *ibid.*
[137] *ibid.*
[138] *ibid.*
[139] PRO CO 1015/2405/95A - *Telegram from PSP to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 27 Sep. 1962

amendment, then the numbers of local members would have been tied at eight each, making it very difficult for the British to proceed. However, the PSP was not defeated for long, as the Yemeni revolution the following day gave a great impetus to the Nationalists in Aden, and brought the influence of Nasser much closer to the Colony and British interests.

The Yemeni Revolution

The September Revolution

Since the end of World War One, the Imams of Yemen had opposed British intervention in the Protectorate/Federation, although they had been willing to recognise Aden as a colony. Their methods of opposition had generally been to support those tribes who had suffered loss of income or power through British support of a rival, and during the 1950s, 'rebels' such as Muhammad Aidrus and the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid would receive arms, money and supplies from the Yemen. The relationship between the Imams and the British was never friendly, and often based on misunderstanding, largely due to differing interpretations of the Treaty of Sana in 1934. However, towards the end of the 1950s, the relationship did begin to improve, and Yemeni interference in the Protectorate diminished, partly because of visits by Luce to Taiz to meet with the Imam, and also because there was a growing opposition to Imamic rule within Yemen itself.

There had been an opposition to the Imam since the 1940s, based around the Free Yemeni Movement, which had campaigned for reform of the Imamate, although not its removal. The reformist leaders (Muhammad al-Zubayri, Ahmad Nu'man) established the Movement in Aden in the early 1940s[140]. However, the Free Yemeni leaders had been sent back by the British when the Imam complained during the 1950s, although it

[140] Dresch, Paul - *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (OUP, Oxford, 1989), p. 238

had also helped the British as some of the Free Yemenis were involved in the UNP opposition to British rule. There had also been two 'revolts' against the Imam's rule; the first in 1948 saw the assassination of Imam Yahya with Free Yemeni involvement, which his successor Ahmad blamed on the British. The second in 1955 saw Ahmad overthrown in a palace coup, but his son al-Badr restored him to the throne with Egyptian help, the price being closer ties to the UAR. The opposition, however, was only slowly moving away from the idea of a constitutional Imamate towards republicanism, and was not particularly 'radical'. This would change during the 1950s as emigrants who had studied or worked in other Arab cities returned with the ideas of Nationalism that Nasser was spreading. During the decade branches of the Communist party, the Arab Nationalist Movement and the Ba'ath were founded within Yemen, and an increasingly large number of Yemenis were adhering to Nasserism by the end of the 1950s[141]. This meant that the aim of the opposition was no longer to reform the Imamate, but to remove it altogether. Moreover, the opposition were also gathering more support as Ahmad's rule saw minor shaikhs sell their landholdings, and there was disaffection among the army officers.

Imam Ahmad went to Rome in April 1959 for medical treatment, which was seen by both the opposition and the Crown Prince al-Badr as a chance for reform, but the return of Ahmad saw the plans for reform disintegrate[142]. According to Dresch, the mere presence of Ahmad was enough to paralyse the opposition, and some of his opponents fled the country. However, when the Imam died on 18th September 1962, the reformist al-Badr took power, and immediately took steps to appease the opposition[143]. This move by the new ruler failed as, a week after coming to power on the evening of the 26th, the army attacked his palace, proclaimed the Imam was dead and established the Yemen Arab Republic, with Abdullah al-Sallal as the new President. In fact al-Badr had escaped to the north of Yemen and was able to organise a Royalist opposition to the

---

[141] Burrowes, Robert D. - *The Yemen Arab Republic - The Politics of Development, 1962-86* (Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, 1987), p. 21

[142] The Imam's illness was also one of the reasons for the lack of Yemeni support for the rebels in the Protectorate since, whilst he was in Rome, the country's energies were directed internally rather than towards the south

[143] Halliday, Fred - *op. cit.*, p. 101

Republicans, setting in motion an eight year civil war which dragged Egypt, Saudi Arabia, Jordan, and the UK into the conflict.

Reactions to the Republican Regime

The initial reaction among British officials in Aden to the Yemeni revolution was one of relief that it had not happened the day before the Legislative Council debate on merger rather than the following day. However, the implications of the revolution were quickly realised once Nasser became involved in supporting the Republicans which brought UAR troops onto the border of the Federation. This gave the Federal rulers a shock, and brought about "a wave of desertions from the Federal forces" as many went north to join the Republican forces[144]. According to Johnston,

> "the ministers became acutely aware that the chilling shadow cast across the mountains and wadis of the Federation was that of Nasser himself, now virtually standing on their frontiers"[145].

The Federal rulers became very concerned about the state of the Federation's defences, for which the British were responsible. Initially the rulers informed the British that they would always be willing to provide the British Government with full facilities for the operation of the base and with sovereignty in any specific areas required for military purposes[146]. However, there was a later deterioration of Federal-British relations as wider political concerns limited the British Government's response to UAR/Republican air and artillery attacks on border villages, whilst the rulers wanted to fight fire with fire.

In Aden, the revolution brought about a change of heart among many of the Ministers who then decided elections should come before the merger, despite having voted against this scheme[147]. The revival of Nasser's influence also gave a boost to the

---

[144] PRO DEFE 11/332/1522 - *Aden: Review of Affairs in the Colony and Protectorate during 1962*
[145] *ibid.*
[146] PRO CO 1015/2398/78 - *Federal Ministers to Secretary of State*, 6 Nov. 1962
[147] PRO CO 1015/2391/498 - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 7 Oct. 1962

Nationalists in Aden, in particular the PSP, with pan-Arabism making a serious impact on South Arabia for the first time. Once again this caused the Federal rulers concern, and they told the Governor that "It is with deep regret and with sincerity that we inform you that we have lost all our confidence in the Aden Government" and that they wanted the ATUC and PSP destroyed[148]. The boost to the Nationalists was countered by the arrest and imprisonment of al Asnag in December 1962, which left the PSP/ATUC leaderless for the winter[149]. In the long-term, however, the influence of Nasser and UAR supplies could be felt in the Colony until June 1967 and the Six Day War.

The British reaction was varied, and there is a certain amount of evidence suggesting covert operations against the Republicans and in favour of the Royalists. Johnston was concerned about a pro-Nasser regime in Yemen as it would mean "the threat to the Aden base may well be serious"[150]. However, the Governor initially could not make up his mind about the question of recognising the Republicans. At first, when it was presumed the Republicans had complete control of the situation, Johnston argued for recognising the new regime because the chances of a Royalist victory were slim[151]. However, the same day he sent that recommendation, he also endorsed covert aid to the claimant to the Yemeni throne, Prince Hussein (al-Badr had been advised to step aside as his father had not been popular), who also confirmed he was receiving Saudi and Jordanian aid[152]. Given his view that he felt Royalist chances were slim, it is surprising that he endorsed the risky action of supporting them. However, once it became clear that the Royalists were not going to be easily defeated, then the Governor argued in favour of supporting them since the Republican regime was dangerous to the British base in Aden with its ability to supply the Nationalists and the possibility of mass desertions from the Federal Regular Army (FRA)[153]. The Commander-in-Chief of the Middle East Forces, however, was not so sure that the Republican regime would have a serious effect on the loyalty of the FRA[154]. This was a dangerous claim to make,

---

[148] PRO CO 1015/2391/519B - *Federal Supreme Council to the Governor of Aden*, 18 Oct. 1962
[149] PRO DEFE 11/332/1522 - *op. cit.*
[150] PRO CO 1015/2391/480 - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 30 Sep. 1962
[151] PRO DEFE 11/166/331 - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 2 Oct. 1962
[152] PRO DEFE 11/166/322 - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 2 Oct. 1962
[153] PRO DEFE 11/166/349B - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 4 Oct. 1962
[154] PRO DEFE 11/166/447 - *CinC ME to MoD London*, 12 Oct. 1962

though, given the experience of mass desertions in the Federal forces during the troubles in the Protectorate in the 1950s,

The British Charge d'Affaires in Taiz (Christopher Gandy), meanwhile was recommending recognition of the Republicans since the Imamate had been so unpopular anyway. Gandy was also unhappy that relations were resumed with Saudi Arabia on the one hand, but there was to be no recognition of the Republicans on the other[155]. However, Gandy was in a minority among British officials, the majority unwilling to grant international recognition to a pro-Nasser regime which potentially threatened British interests. The US, though, did grant recognition to the new regime. No recognition was forthcoming from the UK, however, and the British response to American recognition was one of impotent rage. Macmillan, the Prime Minister, tried to persuade Kennedy not to recognise the regime and press for a UAR withdrawal first. The US President replied that he felt Sallal would turn to the Soviet Union and by the end of 1962 had recognised the Republican regime whereas the British Charge d'Affaires was asked to leave the country[156].

Officially the British played no active role in the Yemeni civil war, other than to lodge complaints at the United Nations when there were infringements of the Federation. However, despite the prevarication over whether to recognise Sallal's Republican regime, there was a more immediate response to the perceived threat to British interests. Possibly without the knowledge of either the Governor in Aden, or even the higher levels at Whitehall, supplies were being sent to the Royalists. It was fairly common knowledge that the Federation was being used by Saudi Arabia to bolster their allies, with the support of the Federal rulers, but British arms were also being supplied. The British representative at Taiz informed the Foreign Office on 11th October that "British weapons have been found at Marib. Rifles could have been explained away but there are heavy weapons including A/A guns"[157]. There were also further pleas for arms and ammunition from the Royalist leader Abdullah bin Hasan, which the MP Colonel

[155] PRO DEFE 11/329/1108 - *Taiz to FO*, 11 Jan. 1963
[156] Macmillan, Harold - *At the end of the day, 1961-63* (Macmillan, London, 1973), pp. 272-8
[157] PRO DEFE 11/166/418 - *Taiz to FO*, 11 Oct. 1962

Maclean recommended should be given, otherwise the Royalist front in the east would collapse[158].

Whilst these claims were never officially sanctioned, according to a Colonial Office representative working in the Federation at the time there certainly were supplies being sent to the Royalists. Furthermore, this clandestine support from British officials in Aden and the Protectorate started almost immediately after the coup overthrowing the Imam took place[159]. This was proven by the Secretary of State for Defence (Thorneycroft) calling for a "sharp increase in 'deniable' support in terms of both arms and money for the Royalist tribes and other tribes capable of interfering with Egyptian plans in the Yemen" in July 1964[160]. Had there been no support in the first place, Thorneycroft would not have been calling for an increase, an admission of British involvement in the Royalist cause.

The Yemeni revolution had an impact throughout the Middle East, involving the regional powers in a proxy war, tying down at least a third of Nasser's forces by 1967, a fact which greatly hindered his military capacity in the June War with Israel. Moreover, there was a smaller proxy war between the UAR and Britain, with covert supplies, at the very least, being sent to the Royalists, and Egypt supplying the Adeni Nationalists with arms and ammunition, as well as training them in camps in Yemen. Before the September revolution, the Nationalists within the Colony had conducted a largely peaceful campaign for independence and the withdrawal of the British base. However, from 1963 onwards, this campaign became increasingly violent, as more radical Nationalists emerged that would challenge al Asnag and the PSP, and create a situation for the British whereby the majority of troops in the base were involved in security duties rather than the defence of British policy in the Gulf.

---

[158] PRO DEFE 11/331/1444 - *Colonel Maclean, MP, to Secretary of State for the Colonies and Foreign Secretary*, 15 April 1963

[159] Interview with a former Aden Government official who wishes to remain anonymous

[160] PRO DEFE 11/499/3342 - *Maintaining our position in South Arabia*, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for Defence, 13 July 1964

Conclusion

The clear fact from British Government documents dealing with Aden in the 1950s and 1960s was that British defence interests east of Suez were paramount. The establishment of the Federation and then its merger with Aden were both moves that policy-makers calculated would preserve the British presence in South Arabia for the longest possible period of time. Whilst sovereignty was the most desirable state of affairs from a British point of view, a balance had to be struck in order to ensure continued local goodwill, without which, Defence Chiefs repeatedly warned, the base would be useless. However, it was becoming increasingly clear that local goodwill was not as forthcoming as it had been before the 1960s. This was especially true after the Yemeni revolution brought the support and influence of Nasser and the UAR onto the very doorstep of the British zone of influence in South West Arabia. The increased pressure from the Nationalists as a result of the Yemeni revolution would force the British Government into repeated changes of policy as they sought to maintain their position in Aden.

Chapter Five: The Granting of Independence, 1963-1966

Introduction

The accession of Aden to the Federation of South Arabia had been viewed by British policy-makers as the most acceptable means of maintaining their hold on the military base. However, the merger process had been protracted and strongly opposed by many within the Colony, although the Legislative Council vote was finally won by the Government of Aden. This victory was short-lived as the proximity of the Egyptian army following the Yemeni revolution was a boost to the Nationalists in Aden and the Federation, who now had a supplier and supporter in a neighbouring state. This gave them arms and propaganda with which to fight the British and their allies within South Arabia. The result was an increasingly violent campaign by those opposed to colonial rule and the presence of the base. Ultimately, the Conservative Government was compelled to grant the promise of independence in order to undermine the opposition, but this tactic failed as the violence continued. Their successors, the Labour Party, despite their socialist and allegedly anti-imperialist stances, also failed to quell the Nationalists, who were becoming increasingly radical with the appearance of the ultimate winners in the conflict, the National Liberation Front.

Conservative Policy

The Little Aden Plan

British Foreign and Defence policy under the Conservative Governments of the late 1950s and early 1960s centred on 'east of Suez', and by 1960 Aden was the

headquarters for the Middle East region of this policy. However, within the Government, and between London and Aden, there were, at times quite extreme, differences over the best implementation of the policy and maintenance of the base. The prime example of these differences was over the concept of sovereign base areas (SBAs) in the Colony, a scheme which was repeatedly rejected by the Chiefs of Staff. Nevertheless, its chief supporter, Duncan Sandys, insisted it was the best means of preserving British defence rights in Aden, which were essential to uphold British interests in the Persian Gulf (primarily Kuwait and the oil supplies it provided). The debate over the SBAs continued until mid-1964, by which time the deteriorating security situation in Aden and the Federation gave rise to the question of granting independence to South Arabia in order to appease the Nationalists who were gathering enough support to threaten British interests.

Sandys had finally seemed to be convinced by the beginning of 1963 that excluding the base areas from the Colony was impracticable as the base would still be reliant upon local goodwill for water and power supplies, let alone air and naval access. However, sovereignty was still the Colonial Secretary's goal, so instead of excising the current base, he proposed building a new base in the uninhabited western part of the Little Aden peninsula and an airfield in the adjoining Federal territory[1]. To achieve this, Sandys wanted to play a game of bluff with the Federal Ministers by initially asking the Governor to propose that the British Government required the continued use of the base areas in Aden itself. Then, when the Ministers gave the expected rejection to sovereign base areas, Johnston was to suggest that the British Government might well content themselves with a new base in the western part of Little Aden. However, Sandys' aim was not to actually build a new base given the expense of such a plan, but at least to be in the position to threaten to do so since he believed,

> "The people of Aden derive so many advantages from our presence in the town that they would, (I think) be very reluctant to see us go and it is very unlikely that we should in fact have to move from our present position"[2].

[1] PRO CO 1055/128/13 - *Cabinet, Overseas Policy Committee: Aden*, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, 17 Jan. 1963
[2] *ibid.*

Moreover, the Colonial Secretary did not want to enter into negotiations with the Federal Ministers about extra aid until they could also negotiate for the setting aside of the proposed areas. Sandys was willing to pay in financial terms for the territory, but would rather no political concessions were involved.

This scheme was met with opposition by certain officials in Aden, and also the Treasury, but had some support from Johnston. His Deputy, Kennedy Trevaskis, however, did not believe the Federal Ministers would be alarmed by the proposals, and were more likely to press for "a political 'quid pro quo'"[3]. Given the Ministers opposition to constitutional advance, Trevaskis believed it was likely that the only political concession they would have desired was independence. The Treasury's opposition was based on its reluctance to add to the already heavy commitments in Aden[4]. This was largely because the estimated cost of building a new base in Little Aden was £50-£75 million, and would take 7-10 years[5]. The other opposition to the scheme came from the Foreign Office who thought the plan would be viewed as an expansion of colonial government (which it effectively was) and was "likely to give another pretext to the Yemenis to attack our Aden policy"[6].

Despite these criticisms, Sandys wanted Johnston to press the Federal and Colony Ministers to agree to the transfer of Khormaksar, Steamer Point (Tawahi) and other areas from Federal to British sovereignty so as to secure their agreement to the Little Aden plan[7]. Johnston was in favour of the plan as the best fall-back option, which was basically how Sandys viewed it since in the best case scenario, the British Government would have maintained sovereignty over the existing areas with full local consent. In order to fulfil British defence requirements, according to the Governor,

---

[3] PRO CO 1055/128/22 - *Letter from Trevaskis to J.C. Morgan (CO)*, 30 Jan. 1963
[4] PRO CO 1055/128/E31 - *Minute from John Boyd-Carpenter (Treasury) to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 1 Feb. 1963
[5] PRO CO 1055/128/36 - *Brief for Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 6 Feb. 1963
[6] PRO FO 371/168629/B1051/14G - *Memo by R.S. Crawford*, 6 Feb. 1963
[7] PRO CO 1055/128/33 - *Letter Eastwood (CO) to Johnston*, 5 Feb. 1963

> "we need to avoid depending on a treaty for our facilities as in Libya or Jordan. Therefore we need sovereignty. We also need to avoid sitting on bayonets, as in the Canal Zone or Cyprus. Therefore we need goodwill"[8].

The need for sovereignty and, in particular, goodwill was true, from a British defence point of view, and was underlined by another Ministry of Defence report highlighting once again the necessity of Aden to best protect interests in the Gulf.

The report was examining alternatives to Aden in order to defend British interests in the Middle East since,

> "it is conceivable that political developments in the Arabian Peninsula may make it difficult for us to rely on the continuing use of our defence facilities in Aden after 1967"[9].

This was a remarkably accurate piece of prophesying, as this was the year that the British withdrawal took place. However, the report, whilst offering alternatives to Aden, such as re-deployment to the Gulf, partial re-deployment to the Gulf with support from Singapore, or to re-establish the base in Little Aden, concluded that the existing facilities were "fundamental to any lasting and effective presence in the Persian Gulf and to our ability to meet effectively our Middle East commitments"[10]. The next best option was re-location in Little Aden, but this would have cost £44 million more than the current plan, and would also require the continued use of Aden harbour which was possibly politically unfeasible and, it was also pointed out, the new base would not be ready by 1967[11].

The British, therefore, either had to admit that a sovereign base in South Arabia was not feasible and so rely on defence rights, or cut back the British Government's commitments in the Middle East, neither of which was ever really properly considered under the Conservatives. William Luce had warned that independence would have to

---

[8] PRO DEFE 11/330/1318D - *Johnston to Secretary of State*, 27 Feb. 1963
[9] PRO DEFE 11/331/1411 - *Methods of Meeting middle East Defence Commitments in the Event of the Loss of Defence Facilities in Aden*, March 1963
[10] *ibid.*
[11] *ibid.*

be granted eventually and the goodwill of the Adenis should be cultivated in order to preserve defence rights. However, his advice was ignored and successive Secretaries of State for Defence and for the Colonies persisted in the belief that sovereign base areas were the only way to defend British interests. The fact that SBAs were becoming a political anachronism as ideas of Arab Nationalism and Nasserism grew never really penetrated British policy-making. Sandys even opposed the High Commissioner's and Commander-in-Chief's proposal to eventually give the Colony the military's surplus land and buildings for nothing because it would not have retained local goodwill for long enough. This plan could have been a relatively cheap means of winning a certain amount of local favour by returning land to Federal control. Instead, the proposal was to be held as a potential concession in future discussions, and Sandys still favoured sovereign base areas as the best way to maintain British defence capabilities in the region[12].

British Defence Interests and Independence

The debate over future policy in South Arabia continued to hinge on unfettered use of the base and how best to achieve this. The question that began to dominate the debate was whether granting independence was the best way of retaining sovereignty over the base areas, and whether the British Government should bargain over this point. From June 1963 to mid-1964, there was a flow of reports on this issue, as well as many telegrams between London and Aden as Kennedy Trevaskis, who became High Commissioner in August 1963, disputed the conclusions reached by the Colonial Office. Eventually, it was decided that independence should be granted, but only when it finally became clear that the situation in Aden and the Federation was becoming increasingly unstable, and the British hold on power was not as strong as had been assumed.

[12] PRO DEFE 11/332/1534 - *Memo from Secretary of State for the Colonies to Minister of Defence*, 15 May 1963

The first proposals about independence came from the Federal Supreme Council who sent a letter to Duncan Sandys after Muhammad Farid and 'Umar Shihab had met the Colonial Secretary in London[13]. The Council drew up a programme leading to independence "following the discussions in London", which would suggest that Sandys had either instigated the proposal, or at least supported the idea of one. The plan was to abrogate the Advisory Treaties and annul Article V of the 1959 Treaty as they gave the unfavourable impression that the Federation was "completely subjected to British dictation". Aden was to be granted independence within the Federation (and the elections postponed) and the British would terminate the 1959 and 1963 Treaties in 1969 to give the Federation complete independence. In order to maintain the "friendly and mutually advantageous relationship" the Council was willing to let the UK excise such areas as they required for military purposes. They would also allow Britain unrestricted use of such areas, in return for: financial aid; help for the defence of the Federation (and, where necessary, for the maintenance of internal security); the support of technical, military, professional and administrative officers; and help in preparing the Federation for independence. The Council concluded that "the absence of a programme [for independence], we believe, is likely to prove equally embarrassing for both the Federation and the United Kingdom". The fact that neither side seemed particularly worried about the "embarrassment" of colonial rule at the time was ignored. The counter-proposal to this was from Bayumi, Chief Minister in Aden, and one of the few local politicians that Johnston admired, who only demanded self-government for Aden[14]. This proposal was the High Commissioner's preferred policy as it would ensure better use of the base for the British with continued sovereignty over the areas surrounding the base, and anyway, Johnston did not want to give Bayumi any more than he asked for, in other words full independence[15].

Once again, the Aden Department of the Colonial Office considered the question of future policy in Aden, in particular the Supreme Council's proposals for

---

[13] PRO CO 1055/129/85 - *Letter from Sharif Husain, Chairman, Supreme Council to Duncan Sandys, Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 3 June 1963
[14] PRO CO 1055/129/80 - *Telegram Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 5 June 1963
[15] PRO CO 1055/129/81 - *Telegram Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 5 June 1963

independence[16]. The proposals, in fact, had been encouraged by Johnston, with the agreement of the Secretary of State[17]. The High Commissioner pointed out that the course of action would be an amalgam of the third and fifth options in the previous paper on future policy. The Department considered that the loss of advisory powers was not significant as they were, "of no more practical use than the reserved powers in Aden since they could only be used in the last resort and at the risk of a crisis in relations with the Federation", and could secure political benefit[18]. On the question of constitutional advance, the Department agreed with Johnston that a grant of internal self-government should be the limit. The Paper even questioned whether any form of constitutional advance was necessary at the time, unless an agreement could be made on the base areas in return. Whilst the Federal Ministers wanted a new Constitution for Aden in order to postpone the elections, this would still have created problems in Parliament. Nevertheless, the question of whether to permit elections and face the dangers of a possible PSP victory or to delay elections was relevant to the entire process. The date of 1969 for independence was acceptable to the Aden Department as this corresponded roughly with Article X of the Treaty of Accession regarding the withdrawal of Aden from the Federation. The more controversial point was over the excision of base areas, which the Department believed was the Colonial Secretary's 'quid pro quo' in return for constitutional advance. However, Sandys himself noted that,

> "I have never accepted that this is a 'quid pro quo'. We have already given the 'quo' in the form of merger and the recent constitutional advance. We are now entitled to the 'quid' without further payment"[19].

This was, again, a rather narrow outlook by the politician who frequently seemed unwilling to accept the need for granting concessions to Britain's allies in return for the continuation of the British presence in South Arabia.

---

[16] PRO CO 1055/129/95 - *Aden: Future Policy*, Paper by the Aden Department, Colonial Office, 7 June 1963
[17] *ibid.*
[18] *ibid.*
[19] *ibid.*

Another problem was the question of future assistance to the Federation, which was strongly supported by the High Commissioner. However, it was highly unlikely that the Treasury would agree to an open-ended commitment, especially as further financial grants to the Federation would increase the existing burden. The final difficulty raised by the Department was the question of timing since the sooner constitutional change was permitted, the greater the pressure for independence would be. On the other hand, if delays were introduced, then some concession would have to be granted to local Ministers, such as a Constitutional Conference. The conclusion that can be inferred from this paper is that the British Government of the time, and in particular Duncan Sandys, were very unwilling to grant any further constitutional advance without first getting what they wanted out of Aden - sovereign base areas. Sandys and the Colonial Office did not seem to have learned from the continual warnings from the Chiefs of Staff that the base would be effectively useless without local goodwill, and by denying Adeni politicians a chance to appease the opposition, that goodwill was unlikely to be forthcoming.

There was, however, some opposition to the Supreme Council's proposals within the Federation as Sharif Husain of Beihan believed that 1969 was too early for independence, and he wanted to keep the Advisory Treaties[20]. Johnston opposed this as it would prejudice Beihan's relations with the other Federal states, but it is interesting to note the reluctance of at least one Federal ruler to end British influence in the Protectorate. This was, though, probably representative of a minority among Federal (and certainly Adeni) Ministers, who were on the whole willing to grant the British certain rights, but at the same time aware of the growing calls for independence. Johnston, in his 'Valedictory Reflections', was also aware of the need to see the bigger picture and take into account the modern world[21]. The departing High Commissioner pointed out that,

> "The winds of change have been blowing hard for some years; Afro-Asian opinion at the United Nations and in the world at large is powerful and violently

[20] PRO CO 1055/129/91 - *Telegram Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 13 June 1963
[21] PRO FO 371/168630/B 1051/33 - *Aden: Valedictory Reflections of Sir Charles Hepburn Johnston, K.C.M.G.*, High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies, 16 July 1963

> anti-colonial. It is clear to us that we cannot shut ourselves up on the rocks and islands which still belong to us and try to ignore the modern world. Early independence for territories like South Arabia must be our real goal and not simply a matter of lip-service"[22].

Nevertheless, the British Government should not "flabbily give in to the currents of world opinion" and Johnston still believed that sovereignty, at least over excised base areas, should be maintained until the late 1960s, when independence should be granted (probably in 1969)[23]. Moreover, he outlined three preconditions necessary for independence to succeed: unification, which had been partly achieved through the merger of Aden and the Federation; stabilisation, which was far more difficult to achieve, especially as the introduction of modern weaponry meant "it is now child's play for a few young officers in tanks and jet aircraft to storm the palace, kill or capture the ruler, take over the radio station - and they are home", and he predicted a coup to follow once British executive control had been removed; and economic self-sufficiency, which involved a need for the diversification and development of the Adeni economy away from oil. Johnston also showed a realistic outlook on the region, advising that Britain's relations with Nasser should be pragmatic, and that the concept of a Greater South Arabia was not one to be opposed. In conclusion, he noted that "as long as we need the oil of the Persian Gulf we shall have a mercenary motive for keeping the idea of Anglo-Arab partnership alive"[24]. Leaving behind an independent and prosperous South Arabia, Johnston proposed, would be a good advertisement for maintaining the British connection[25].

Johnston was here showing a more considered and realistic view of British policy in the Middle East, but, as with Luce, his approach was not necessarily one that the Colonial Office wanted to take into account. The idea of not instinctively opposing Nasser would have been especially hard for British policy-makers to agree with. This could be seen by the clandestine operations conducted against the UAR in the Yemen, including

---

[22] *ibid.*
[23] *ibid.*
[24] *ibid.*
[25] *ibid.*

the supplying and training of the Royalists by 'ex-SAS' soldiers (see Chapter Six)[26]. Moreover, Johnston's ideas about granting independence were also not universally accepted, despite his informed view that by doing so, the British Government should be in a position to retain sufficient influence to defend its interests. The Foreign Secretary believed that, if Britain had a choice about granting independence, it would depend on an assessment of the British Government's interest in supporting the independence of Kuwait[27]. The Colonial Secretary thought independence would actually come sooner than 1969, but rather optimistically held the view that "the Federation will remain dependent on us for so many years to come that we need not fear that they will be uncooperative for as long as it suits us to keep the base"[28]. This view clearly had not taken into account Britain's other experiences in the Middle East since 1945, something which Johnston had done and which did influence his views on future British policy.

Trevaskis vs. Sandys: Policy differences between Aden and the Colonial Office

Johnston's successor as High Commissioner, Kennedy Trevaskis, held similar views to his predecessor, but was much more aggressive in his attempts to get the Colonial Office in London to listen to them. Trevaskis had served in the Protectorate and Colony since 1953, and knew the situation probably better than any other British official working there at the time. However, his long experience and narrow focus on South Arabia coloured Trevaskis's views on wider British policy-making, especially as he felt that the Protectorate rulers, with strong British support, could run the Federation effectively. The new High Commissioner set out his theories on future policy shortly after taking office in which he reasoned that,

> "if there were no positive prospect of independence under the leadership of our friends, it is all too likely that there would be a general move throughout the

[26] A former Aden Government official, who wishes to remain anonymous, has evidence of the almost immediate reaction to the Yemeni coup by certain British civil servants in Aden and the Federation at the time, involving clandestine operations in support of the Royalists and against the Republicans
[27] PRO FO 371/168630/B1051/36 - *Comments on Valedictory Reflections of Johnston*, Sep./Oct. 1963
[28] *ibid.*

Federation towards an 'independence' band wagon under the control of our enemies"[29].

In his view, there was a likelihood of a Republican victory in the Yemen, and so an independent republic with good relations with other Arab states would have greater appeal to the politically conscious than the status quo. Therefore it would be in a better position to resist the challenge of "Yemeni irredentism". Trevaskis believed that a cautious approach, retaining constitutional power for as long as possible would result in a PSP-led government. For this reason, the British Government should be bold and give Aden independence within the Federation as soon as feasible, although this meant delaying the elections to ensure the moderates took power. As regards sovereignty in the base areas, Trevaskis advocated flexibility through agreeing to renounce sovereignty after a certain period of time or maybe only retaining it in certain key areas such as Khormaksar airport. Moreover, Britain would need to act quickly before the UN and the YAR "go into action against us" or else "we shall be courting disaster"[30]. The High Commissioner believed that the Republicans and Egyptians in the YAR should be kept too busy dealing with the Royalists, and so buying time for the Federation to establish itself.

These views, however, were not welcomed by Sandys and the Colonial Office, who felt that the best future policy would be to confer internal self-government on Aden to the same degree as the other Federal states. This would have meant that British sovereignty, the Federal advisory clause (the right of the UK to advise the rulers on defence and security matters) and the High Commissioner's power to override in security matters would have been retained. There would also have been an immediate undertaking to grant the Federation (including Aden) independence on any date after the end of 1965, the Aden Legislative Council would have its life extended, and the base areas would be immediately excised. There was agreement with Trevaskis that the "colonial" relationship should be ended as soon as possible, but time was needed to build up the Federation into an institution capable of governing an independent South

[29] PRO CO 1055/129/128 - *A Note on Constitutional Advance in the Federation and Aden*, Kennedy Trevaskis, 17 Sep. 1963
[30] *ibid.*

Arabia. Moreover, Sandys believed that, since elections were likely to produce a PSP victory, then the British Government should not hand over complete control to the State Government until the Federation became independent[31].

These counter-proposals produced a series of, at times acrimonious, telegrams between Aden and London as Trevaskis attempted to have his views accepted by London, but generally to no avail. The High Commissioner's view was that,

> "our agreed aim is that Aden should gain its independence within an 'independent' Federation linked firmly to ourselves by treaty and subject to our influence and indirect control: our purpose being to safeguard our interests in Aden (the sovereign base areas and our freedom to operate the base) through the agency of the Federation rather than through our present Colonial constitutional powers"[32].

The problems that the British Government faced in achieving this were: firstly, possible UN pressure (which Eastwood noted was "not valid"); secondly, the moderates would require substantial inducement to accept inclusion in the Federation on the present basis, whilst the PSP would oppose it; and finally, retaining control of the base would either require financial inducement to the moderates again, or be leased from the PSP - if they were willing. In Trevaskis's opinion, no inducements were offered by the Colonial Office's plan and decisions were being deferred. The High Commissioner believed that decisions on independence would have to be made immediately and inducements to the moderates made. Moreover, the PSP should be excluded from political power until the plan had gone through and a constitutional conference should be called to agree upon Aden's independence within the Federation (subject to the excision of base areas), as well as granting independence to the Federation. The question of the timing of elections should be left to the Government of Aden once it got independence.

Trevaskis did modify his proposals in the face of opposition from Whitehall, but only over the idea of sovereign base areas. The Defence Secretary favoured treaty relations

---

[31] PRO CO 1055/129/154A - *Telegram from Eastwood to Trevaskis*, 11 Oct. 1963
[32] PRO CO 1055/130/158 - *Telegram from Trevaskis to Eastwood*, 14 Oct. 1963

instead of SBAs since sovereignty would sour local goodwill, and the High Commissioner agreed with this[33]. This, though, was again amended to retaining sovereignty over Bir Fuqum in Little Aden to show the British Government's "friends" that the British were not going[34]. In London, the debate focused on Sandys's proposals rather than those of Trevaskis, in particular making Aden a protectorate within the Federation, as opposed to granting full independence. The Chiefs of Staff welcomed the proposal, but were still uncertain that creating SBAs would produce the desired results[35]. The Foreign Office also worried that the retention of sovereignty over the base would end the possibility of goodwill in Aden. One Foreign Office official noted that, whilst SBAs might be the right answer from a British point of view, they would definitely be seen as objectionable by the Arab world, "condemning a part of the Arab world to perpetual colonial rule"[36].

The State of Emergency and its Effect on Policy

Policy had to be re-thought once more, however, after the grenade attack against Trevaskis at Khormaksar airport on 10th December 1963, which missed the High Commissioner, but killed two others[37]. This lead to the British declaring a State of Emergency in the Colony, and meant sovereignty could not be ceded without appearing weak, according to Sandys, and so Aden was only to be given an advanced degree of self-government[38]. The implication was that sovereignty would have been ceded had the grenade attack not taken place, but instead the Colonial Office had to retain sufficient control in order to keep the base secure. The base at this time was being expanded, partly due to the need for troops for internal security (IS) duties. The Chiefs of Staff therefore recommended an extra infantry unit in either Aden or Bahrein so that the IS battalion in Aden would not be used in any operation in Kuwait[39]. This need for reinforcements after declaring a State of Emergency should have suggested to policy-

---

[33] PRO CO 1055/130/168 - *Telegram Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 24 Oct. 1963
[34] PRO CO 1055/130/181 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 5 Nov. 1963
[35] PRO CO 1055/130/212 - *Extract from CoS Meeting*, 3 Dec. 1963
[36] PRO FO 371/168631/B1051/43(G) - *Brief for Secretary of State for Defence*, 3 Dec. 1963
[37] Trevaskis, Kennedy - *op. cit.*, pp. 198-9
[38] PRO CO 1055/130/245 - *Telegram Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis*, 16 Dec. 1963
[39] PRO DEFE 11/163/72 - *Force Levels in Aden and the Persian Gulf*, Nov./Dec. 1963

makers that their hold on South Arabia was not that secure. However, instead of trying to relinquish that hold, create allies, and try to retain defence rights by treaty, which was the preferred policy of the defence chiefs, the continuation of colonial rule, albeit somewhat diluted, was the answer according to the Colonial Office.

The aim of the policy was for the relationship between the Colony and the British Government to be as near as possible as that between the other federated states and the British Government[40]. There were differences to the relationship, since Aden would remain under British sovereignty, the High Commissioner would become a representative of the British Government and a local "personality" would become the Queen's representative. Moreover, the right to excise base areas for defence purposes would be retained as would the right to withdraw Aden from the Federation. However, the High Commissioner would relinquish direct responsibility for internal security and the police although he would still retain overriding legislative powers. The Aden Legislature would be given the right to amend its own Constitution, but this was subject to the British Government's overriding power to legislate by Order in Council. In the Federation, Britain would retain full control of defence and external affairs, but surrender the power of mandatory advice on other matters. Once again, Trevaskis disagreed with the proposed policy from the Colonial Office stating,

> "our ultimate aim should remain independence for Aden within the Federation since we are more likely to safeguard our interests here in long term (sic.) if the Federation is given a free hand to deal with our enemies in Aden than if, as a consequence of the persistence of British sovereignty, British Parliamentary and other pressures result in a hostile Government emerging in Aden under British protection and thereafter the Federation going sour on us"[41].

However, despite advocating Aden independence within the Federation, Trevaskis was wary of giving away all the concessions advocated by the Colonial Office since it would leave the British Government with much less bargaining power, and also upset the Federation. There was agreement with most of the points made by London, but the power of the High Commissioner should not be diminished. This was particularly true

[40] PRO CO 1055/131/264 - *Telegram from Sir John Martin (CO) to Trevaskis*, 6 Jan. 1964
[41] PRO CO 1055/131/270 - *Trevaskis to Martin*, 11 Jan. 1964

over the issue of internal security with the danger of a PSP government coming to power. The threat of a PSP victory in elections was also why Trevaskis felt the Aden Legislature should not have the power to amend its own constitution. Even if the other concessions were made, that would have still given Aden a substantial degree of constitutional advance and enhance the authority of the moderates, leaving the British with sufficient further inducements to get Aden to agree to independence within the Federation.

This was not accepted by the Colonial Office who felt "such limited concessions" were unlikely to be viewed favourably in Aden nor were they likely to improve the electoral prospects of the moderates[42]. Trevaskis admitted the concessions were limited, but he seemed to believe the fact that they would be made before an election meant they would be accepted since "opinion generally only expects concessions after elections"[43]. Sandys claimed that he did take these views into account and sought Cabinet approval for various concessions. These included the appointment of a local personality to be appointed 'Wali' or Governor to perform ceremonial functions, the Chief Minister to become Premier and preside over a Cabinet and the Aden Government to get full legislative and executive powers over State subjects and the power to amend the Constitution[44]. These were the minimum Sandys felt necessary to offer the moderates assistance in winning the elections, but Trevaskis still disagreed with the policy. The High Commissioner again stated independence within the Federation was essential for British interests as the consequence of continuing British sovereignty being a deteriorating situation which would cause friction with the rulers[45]. The importance of good relations with the Federal Ministers was because of the often-repeated need for local goodwill and "the friendship of the Federation" in order to maintain the British presence[46]. Trevaskis suggested offering the Adeni representatives at the forthcoming conference independence within the Federation to be granted after elections and have

---

[42] PRO CO 1055/131/271 - *Martin to Trevaskis*, 12 Jan. 1964
[43] PRO CO 1055/131/273 - *Trevaskis to Martin*, 13 Jan. 1964
[44] PRO CO 1055/131/286 - *Martin to Trevaskis*, 27 Jan. 1964
[45] PRO CO 1055/131/291 - *Trevaskis to Martin*, 29 Jan. 1964
[46] *ibid.*

all political parties present. Trevaskis, however, was not listened to, and his advice generally ignored as the Colonial Office proceeded with their own proposals.

Ultimately, the Secretary of State had to inform Trevaskis that independence within the Federation was simply not possible at the time. The reason given was that it would have been impossible to convince the UK public that the surrender of sovereignty was not a weakness, and that was the priority as far as Sandys was concerned[47]. The Colonial Office proposals were therefore the chosen policy that Sandys presented to the Cabinet's Defence and Overseas Policy Committee in January 1964[48]. The proposals had been reconsidered following the Khormaksar grenade attack, and the Secretary of State was convinced of the need to make some concessions. Despite this, only a limited form of constitutional advance would be offered and not the independence that the Federal Ministers desired or the independence within the Federation that the Adeni Ministers were expected to demand. The proposals were aimed to bring the relationship of Aden to the UK and the Federation into line with the relationship of the other federated states, without giving up British sovereignty, in other words ignoring Trevaskis's views. The changes (see above) were to be introduced at the same time as giving up the mandatory power of advice to the Federal Government in all matters other than defence, external affairs and internal security.

There was considerable opposition within Whitehall to these proposals. The Treasury were not happy to be committed to a general compensation scheme for British civil servants in Aden, nor were they pleased about giving up the power of mandatory advice in the federation as it would remove the legal basis of British financial control there[49]. The High Commissioner remained unhappy at the proposals as, without independence for Aden, Trevaskis felt the concessions went too far, a stance which lead to him being called an "'all or nothing' man" by the Colonial Office[50]. Trevaskis was not alone in his belief that Sandys' policy was not the best way forward for British interests in South

---

[47] PRO CO 1055/131/293 - *Secretary of State to Trevaskis*, 31 Jan. 1964
[48] PRO CO 1055/131/284 - *Defence and Overseas Policy Committee: Aden*, Memorandum by the Secretary of State for the Colonies, Jan. 1964
[49] PRO CO 1055/131/E/284 - *Draft Note to the Secretary of State*, Jan. 1964
[50] PRO CO 1055/131/307 - *Note from Fisher to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 7 Feb. 1964

Arabia, as Mountbatten, Chief of the Defence Staff, stated his concerns about the military implications of policy in Aden[51]. He was afraid that the facilities the British used would disappear unless a long lasting answer to the situation in the Colony was found. Mountbatten also believed that independence within the Federation was the best option as the only reliable friends that the British Government had were the Federal rulers. Moreover, the move could have been represented internationally as a step forward, and would, in his opinion, remove much of the point to the Nationalist campaign. Mountbatten admitted that if the Federal rulers were overthrown then there would be no sovereignty to fall back on. However, even if there was still sovereignty, Britain would be in an untenable position as there would be no local goodwill.

The Colonial Office disputed this, since previously the Chiefs of Staff had stated that the only secure tenure for the base was full sovereignty, and also because it was unlikely that the goodwill of the Adenis would be retained by putting them under the thumb of the Federal Rulers[52]. However, the Secretary of State for Defence, Thorneycroft, supported the Chiefs of Staff, preferring "a Malaysia rather than a Singapore solution for Aden". This meant independence within the Federation, relying on the rulers to maintain the British presence, since without the rulers sovereignty would only be of theoretical value as there would be no goodwill[53].

Trevaskis put forward similar views in reiterating his proposals for constitutional advance, since the British Government had only two possible courses of action to follow[54]. Firstly there was independence within the Federation, which meant the Federal rulers could take responsibility for internal security, the Adeni moderates would be encouraged, the surrender of sovereignty could be seen as a forward step and Aden could be viewed as a force for progress in the Federation. However, once independence was granted there would be nothing for the British Government to fall back on if the Federal rulers "went sour" or were deposed. Moreover, even if British sovereignty still

---

[51] PRO CO 1055/131/311A - *Draft Minute by Mountbatten to Minister of Defence*, 7/8 Feb. 1964 & PRO DEFE 11/423/2452 - *Minute from Chief of the Defence Staff to Minister of Defence*, 12 Feb. 1964
[52] PRO CO 1055/132/320 - *Note from Formoy to Fisher*, 12 Feb. 1964
[53] PRO CO 1055/132/336 - *Note from Minister of Defence to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 18 Feb. 1964
[54] PRO CO 1055/131/316 - *Notes on Constitutional Development in Aden*, 7 Feb. 1964

existed then the base would probably be untenable. The second option was constitutional advance short of independence, which would mean that if things went wrong then Britain could still resume direct rule, and the Adeni moderates could claim they were making progress. The problem with this option was that a hostile Nationalist Government would campaign against the Federation, the British Government would still be criticised for colonialism, and whilst British influence would be reduced, Federal power would not be increased. Trevaskis still believed the first course of action was preferable, but whatever policy was followed the status quo was not an option.

The combined opposition from the High Commissioner, the Ministry of Defence, and also the Treasury, did force yet another re-think of policy as Sandys came round to the idea of granting Aden independence within the Federation. The basis of the new paper submitted to the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee was that the Colonial Secretary accepted the argument that the Federal rulers were the British Government's most reliable friends[55]. This was especially true as there was a real possibility that the "extremists" would win the elections, which had to take place by 25th October. Therefore, sovereignty was to be relinquished and Aden was to be made "a fully autonomous State in the Federation". The reasons given were the same as those Trevaskis had been advocating for the previous six months with the British Government retaining responsibility for defence and external affairs, as well as the right to withdraw from the Federation any part of Aden considered "desirable for defence reasons". Whilst Sandys had finally accepted Trevaskis's proposals, the Colonial Secretary was still wary of the changes being seen as withdrawal, and so the public presentation of the new policy was to be minimised since any impression of withdrawal "would make it more difficult to retain effective influence"[56].

---

[55] PRO CO 1055/132/350 - *Aden: New Paper for D.O.P.C.*, First Alternative Draft, 24 Feb. 1964
[56] PRO CO 1055/132/367 - *Telegram Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner*, 3 March 1964

Future policy had, therefore, been decided, but the decisions had taken so long that further re-thinks were made necessary as the situation within Aden and the Federation began to change quite radically. The result was that the challenges facing the British grew increasingly difficult to meet. Trevaskis informed Sandys of the "grave threat to our position in Aden" in April 1964, only a few weeks after the constitutional changes had been agreed upon[57]. The presence of Nasser's army in the Yemen posed a serious potential threat meriting "urgent and extraordinary measures"[58]. These measures had not been implemented despite the warnings of both Johnston and Trevaskis since November 1962 which meant that "we are now confronted with the consequences of our failure to act in time"[59]. Whilst the YAR "is a meaningless farce", propped up by 40,000 UAR troops with the Royalists still in control of large areas, that was not how the Adeni public at large perceived the situation thanks to the propaganda coming from 'Saut al Arab' (Voice of the Arabs) on Cairo Radio, as well as Republican views from Sana Radio. The threat from the YAR was creating low morale among "our friends", the Federal rulers and the moderates, and Trevaskis warned that "we could only expect to maintain our present position by resort to stern repressive measures undertaken thoroughly and with determination", which was not possible given the political consequences[60]. Therefore, the High Commissioner saw only two alternatives short of disengagement and withdrawal - to either give the Federation immediate independence, or to seek to come to terms with "our enemies"[61].

Trevaskis's concern was mirrored by the Prime Minister who wanted,

> "a well though out plan for the political advance and economic development of Aden which would give us a reasonable chance of keeping, for some time yet, the military facilities we need"[62].

---

[57] PRO DEFE 11/522/2832 - *Letter Trevaskis to Sandys*, 20 April 1964
[58] *ibid.*
[59] *ibid.*
[60] *ibid.*
[61] *ibid.*
[62] PRO DEFE 11/497/2980A - *Prime Minister's Personal Minute*, 5 May 1964

Furthermore, Douglas-Home stated,

> "I am not convinced that we are doing all that we might to secure the political support of the inhabitants of Aden and the Federation. Their political advance and economic development are essential, if we are to keep our hold on Aden"[63].

The threat to British interests in South Arabia from the YAR was such that, for the first time, the British Government considered asking the United Nations for observers along the frontier and for help in reaching an agreement on demilitarisation and demarcation of the border[64]. Moreover, further changes in future policy were being considered by the time the conference on South Arabia was to open in June. It was no longer deemed necessary to keep the brake on constitutional advance and to rely on the Federal rulers. The Colonial Secretary by this point believed it would be safe, even necessary, to allow the Federation (including Aden) to move towards independence since "everyone in Aden and the Federation now recognises the need to retain the British base"[65]. However, the Ministry of Defence were still worried that the rulers would suggest they should be given full independence as the best means of "riding the punches of Arab nationalism" since "events in Yemen do not suggest that we ought to place very much faith in their judgement"[66]. For this reason, the Ministry suggested that Thorneycroft should not agree with the Colonial Secretary about future policy.

Independence was granted to the Federation at the conference in London, but it would not take place until 1968, and there were no plans to withdraw from the base. However, this actually did little to appease the Nationalists who were being encouraged by the support of Nasser and the UAR in the Yemen to intensify their campaign. The Ministry of Defence were aware of the dangers coming from the Yemen, but warned that,

> "whilst swift and robust military action may well be effective in the short term, no lasting solution can be expected from such action by itself. The most that

[63] PRO DEFE 13/569/59 - *Prime Minister's Personal Minute to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 8 May 1964
[64] PRO DEFE 11/498/3162 - *UK Mission to United Nations to Foreign Office*, 16 May 1964
[65] PRO DEFE 13/569/109 - *Brief for Secretary of State for Defence for DOPC Meeting*, 3 June 1964
[66] *ibid.*

> military action can achieve in the long term is to help to promote stable conditions in which political and economic development can proceed"[67].

Moreover, the Secretary of State for Defence recommended countering the influence of Nasser by "a sharp increase in 'deniable' support" for the Royalists[68]. It was also recommended that funds for road building and well digging (with full publicity) inside the Federation should be granted[69]. The latter was approved by the Cabinet with an additional £500,000 for development, £500,000 for increased political grants, £120,000 to meet the cost of local labour and material, and a £500,000 reserve fund to prevent revolts[70]. The "deniable" support to the Royalists was more of a problem since, as the Chiefs of Staff pointed out, the amount of aid necessary was £600,000, 11,000 rifles, 20 mortars with bombs, 20.5 machine guns for AA defence, 20 bazookas with bombs and 500 anti-tank mines, all of which would last about three months and could not be kept secret[71]. Trevaskis by this time, however, was not in favour of supporting the Royalists, who he believed would have collapsed by the end of the year. Therefore, the High Commissioner proposed that the British Government should come to terms with Egypt by recognising the YAR, at the same time providing the rulers with arms and money to regain the confidence of the tribes, and resorting to repressive action against the PSP[72]. The High Commissioner repeated that Britain was heading for certain disaster in Aden, and that "this is the last warning I can give" because his previous warnings about the threat from the Yemen and Egypt had gone unheeded for too long.

The grant of independence was the last policy announced by the Conservatives, as in the October 1964 elections they were defeated by Harold Wilson's Labour Party. This was generally greeted with dismay among the Federal rulers who thought that Labour would appease the Nationalists and undermine their rule, but surprisingly little actually changed in the immediate aftermath of the elections. The Conservative Government

---

[67] PRO DEFE 11/499/3264 - *Aden and the South Arabian Federation*, Report by the Defence Planning Staff, 26 June 1964
[68] PRO DEFE 11/499/3342 - *op. cit.*
[69] *ibid.*
[70] PRO DEFE 13/570 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Acting High Commissioner*, 24 July 1964
[71] PRO DEFE 11/499/3383 - *CoS Memorandum for Ministers*, 21 July 1964 - the Chiefs of Staff also pointed out that part of the purpose should be to let HMG's plans known in the Federation to give the rulers more confidence in the British
[72] PRO DEFE 13/570/57 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies* 18 July 1964

had hesitated over future policy for South Arabia on several occasions, and the reluctance of Duncan Sandys to accept the views of either the Defence chiefs over sovereign base areas, or Trevaskis over independence for Aden, meant that opportunities to consolidate the British position in Aden were possibly lost. The unwillingness to grant constitutional advance in the Colony undermined the position of the moderates who were coming under pressure from the increasingly influential Nationalist parties. Moreover, Sandys's inability to realise that sovereignty was useless without local goodwill meant that the British Government kept to an increasingly untenable and self-injuring position. A more flexible approach, one which would have ceded sovereignty earlier and granted constitutional advance, might have undermined the Nationalists appeal. Instead the refusal to listen to the British Government's representatives who had personally experienced the situation in South Arabia, men such as William Luce, Charles Johnston, and Kennedy Trevaskis, meant that the British were in an increasingly unpopular position, and one which was proving difficult to defend.

Labour and Maintaining the Empire

Different Party, Same Policy?

The approach shown by Labour in their first twelve months in power was not markedly different to that of the Conservatives, as regards maintaining the remnants of the empire. Wilson still aimed for Britain to play a world role, despite the increasing domestic financial and economic difficulties, and as such there were no immediate moves towards relinquishing the few remaining colonies and overseas territories. However, there probably was a slightly more realistic approach to Britain's overseas role, in particular by certain Cabinet ministers, such as Richard Crossman, who wanted to cut the British Government's commitments. As regards Aden and the Federation, the situation was growing more difficult by the day as the Nationalists' assault on 'imperialism' and 'colonialism' was increasing in popularity, and the more violent

campaigns of the NLF were beginning to show signs of success. The Labour Government's attitude to the problems was to attempt a more inclusive form of debate about the future of South Arabia, and attempts were made to involve certain Nationalist groups in the talks. However, by then it was probably too late as Nationalist rivalry was causing different groups to grow increasingly extreme in their methods, and anybody seen as 'collaborating' with the British was threatened with execution.

The problem facing the British was that, with independence due within approximately four years, the Federation was in no state to either govern or defend itself as it had been reliant on British advice, aid and military support since its creation in 1959. The Federal forces were in need of expansion and improvement if they were to be able to defend an independent state without British military aid. The Geraghty and Penfold reports were commissioned to achieve this aim, but the problem was financing such a move. The Chiefs of Staff, therefore, recommended that the Secretaries of State for Defence and Colonies allied "in a joint assault on the Treasury" to get the necessary expenditure[73]. The Colonial Secretary, Anthony Greenwood, did write to the Treasury, pointing out the improvements in organisation, equipment and pay that were necessary to sustain the Federation. Moreover, he warned that whilst the British Army could contain the military situation,

> "at a pinch (and at great expense) ... but by themselves they can no more prepare the way for peaceful Independence than could the Belgian army in the Congo or the French army in Algeria"[74].

This line was supported by the new Defence Secretary, Denis Healey, as the attempt was made to pressure the Treasury into giving the necessary funds[75].

---

[73] PRO DEFE 11/501/3706 - *Report for CoS Committee*, 15 Dec. 1964
[74] PRO DEFE 11/523/3712 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to the Treasury*, 16 Dec. 1964
[75] PRO DEFE 11/523/3714 - *Secretary of State for Defence to the Treasury*, 18 Dec. 1964

The Threat to the Protectorate

The threat to the British position in South Arabia had been underlined by successive Governors and High Commissioners, and generally ignored or the reaction had been too late. Once more, the British Government was warned of the urgent need to act quickly if their chosen successors, the Federal rulers, were to survive independence. The Western Aden Protectorate Security Committee followed up their 1962 paper on "The Nature of the Threat to the Western Aden protectorate and the Steps Needed to Deal with it" with another paper on "The Situation in the Federation of South Arabia on 1 January 1965"[76]. The report opened with the implied criticism that,

> "Although it is not possible to assess the effect of the Committee's recommendations to deal with the threat, because they have so far only been implemented in part, and then only comparatively recently, there can be no doubt that the Committee's estimate of the threat to the Protectorate has been proved by events during the past 2 years to have been extremely accurate"[77].

The main threat, according to the Committee was Egypt, which had two targets since,

> "if the Federation as such can be destroyed our position in Aden will become untenable; alternatively, our premature withdrawal from Aden would ensure the collapse of the Federation"[78].

The former was viewed as Egypt's more likely aim rather than direct action against Aden. The UAR had five possible courses to achieve the destruction of the Federation: subverting the existing authority in the Federation, with some rulers already "looking over their shoulders"; undermining the position of the rulers by exploiting family/tribal rivalries; undermining the Federal Government's authority, including the establishment of a "liberation army" (as foreseen in the 1962 paper); subverting individuals within the Federal Forces, as there was already concern over the morale of the troops; and establishing a "Government in Exile" by using notable Protectorate defectors to provide

---

[76] PRO DEFE 11/595/3818 - *The Situation in the Federation of South Arabia on 1 January 1965*, Paper by the Western Aden Protectorate Security Committee, 10 Jan. 1965
[77] *ibid.*
[78] *ibid.*

an air of "respectability" to the National Liberation Front (NLF). There was evidence, according to the Committee, that all five options were being pursued concurrently, in addition to direct pressure on the British presence through "terrorist and propaganda activity designed to upset Adeni/British relations and to undermine our will to remain"[79]. Moreover, the 1962 report had emphasised the inability of the Federal Forces to deal effectively with more than one of the following three threats: overt aggression by Yemeni forces; the employment of a "Liberation Army"; tribal disaffection. To counter this, the Committee recommended increased air support, strengthening of the Federal Regular Army and Federal Guard, and the provision of additional vehicles, but apart from additional air support, none of these "palliatives" had been implemented. At the same time, the FRA and FG had been faced with two of the three situations envisaged by the 1962 paper, the sole exception being overt Yemeni aggressions, and had done so without the recommended increases. The British needed to find extra resources to enable the enlargement of the Federal Forces and improve the conditions since the large scale use of British troops was unsatisfactory on political and economic grounds:

> "The Arab argument is that if there were no British in Aden there would be no reason for aggression from Egypt, and if the British insist on remaining in Arabia for their own economic and strategic reasons, then they have an obligation to protect the Federation from the consequences"[80].

Once again, the Committee made certain recommendations to deal with the threat, since there were two factors in Britain's favour: the fear of Egyptian domination, which was becoming clear among both Royalists and Republicans in the north, and should be made clear to inhabitants of the Federation; and the economic value of the base, which was vital to the economy of South West Arabia. In 1962, the Committee had recommended making "a reality of the Federation", through measures such as: changing the nature of the British relationship with the Federation; expanding the Federal forces; constructing a macadamised road system; introducing a Federal Broadcasting Service; and providing reserve funds to meet unforeseeable requirements.

---

[79] *ibid.*
[80] *ibid.*

Instead "only half measures have been taken to implement the previous committee's recommendations and then only after considerable delay"[81]. All these actions were still necessary, and in addition there was a need to: convince the Federal rulers that the British Government intended to stay in Aden, at least until the Federation was a viable, independent state; urgently complete the Aden-Mudia section of the Aden-Beihan trunk road; increase the sums available for economic development; train a small corps of administrators to become liaison officers between the States and central Government; and review the financial control by the Colonial Office and the Treasury so that Federal Ministers could develop a more responsible attitude to the expenditure of resources. Furthermore, there was an "extreme urgency" to establish a high powered transmitter for propaganda purposes in order to expose "Egypt's intentions". The final recommendations were: to undertake "offensive action over the border against the Yemeni tribes"; and to reorganise and expand the Federal Forces to make them more mobile and effective. The report concluded somewhat pessimistically,

> "The fact that the retention of our position in SW Arabia is the result as much of the failures of our enemies as of our own measures to counter the situation gives little cause for congratulation. More positive measures on the lines recommended must be taken as a matter of urgency if we are to ensure that the Federation is to be capable of withstanding the pressures from Egypt which will undoubtedly continue and indeed increase"[82].

Similar warnings and recommendations came from the Chiefs of the Defence Staff. They, together with the Commander-in-Chief Middle East and the High Commissioner, considered that,

> "we shall need a military base in Aden for a period of many years and that, in order to allay uncertainty, we should affirm loud and clear our intention to remain. Our military presence is vital, but not enough"[83].

In order to maintain the base, which was necessary to support the British Government's declared policy of maintaining peace and promoting progress east of Suez, the Chiefs of

---

[81] *ibid.*
[82] *ibid.*
[83] PRO DEFE 11/595/3833 - *Chiefs of the Defence Staff (in Aden) to Ministry of Defence*, 9 Feb. 1965

Staff and High Commissioner set out some remedial measures. Firstly a programme of social development was needed to benefit the Federation Arabs. Secondly, support for the rulers had to be enlarged to stop them going over to Nasser. Finally, the High Commissioner estimated £20 million was necessary over three or four years to invest in civil affairs, such as road building and water supplies. The recommendation by the WAP Security Committee on propaganda was supported by D.J. McCarthy, the Political Officer for Middle East Command (POMEC), who stated that the South Arabian Broadcasting Service could not compete with Cairo and Sana Radios and should be allowed "the occasional descent into something more Arab in character"[84].

Labour's Response to the Threat

The new Colonial Secretary, Anthony Greenwood, had visited the Colony shortly after assuming office, in order to gauge for himself the nature of the situation. On his return he announced that the Federal States would be fused into a unitary state, which was approved by the Aden Legislative Council (12 December), and called for a conference, including al Asnag, in London in March 1965[85]. However, by this time, the NLF had extended their campaign to Aden, as well as the Protectorate, and in February issued warnings that they would kill anybody attending the conference[86]. This was one of the factors behind the conference being postponed, but there were also problems over the parties disagreeing over the purpose of the conference and the representation of the assorted political bodies invited[87]. There was also hesitation within Whitehall to the idea of a unitary state without the support of the Federal rulers, from the Ministry of Defence, who felt it would cause disruption[88].

There were continued attempts by the British Government to improve the situation in South Arabia, but they generally failed. Partly this was due to the increasingly difficult

---

[84] PRO FO 371/179780/B1681/3 - *Letter from McCarthy to Brenchley (FO)*, 10 Feb. 1965
[85] Balfour-Paul, Glen - *The end of empire in the Middle East* (CUP, Cambridge, 1991), p. 82
[86] *ibid.*, p. 82
[87] PRO DEFE 11/596/3875 - *South Arabian Conference, March 1965*, Brief for the Secretary of State for Defence, 23 Feb. 1965
[88] *ibid.*

situation within both Aden and the Protectorate created by the NLF's campaign, as well as the campaigns of other Nationalist groups. The actions of these groups had eroded the morale of the Federal rulers and the Federal forces, as well as seriously hampered the ability of the British forces to provide security for the base. However, there was also an unwillingness to permit the Armed Forces to use force at times, much to the disgust of the Defence chiefs who wanted the Government to "show a strong hand in Aden" to discredit the Aden Government which had become openly hostile to Britain, and also to boost the morale of the Federal security forces[89]. Ultimately, the internal security situation in Aden deteriorated to such a point that the Constitution had to be suspended by the High Commissioner (Richard Turnbull, who had taken over from Trevaskis the previous December) and a State of Emergency was declared on 25th September[90].

The State of Emergency lasted until November 1967 (see below) when the British withdrew from Aden. From September 1965 onwards, British policy in South Arabia concentrated on finding a successor to take over the reins of power when independence came. Preferably, in the minds of the British, this successor government was to be based on the Federal Ministers, but increasingly such a situation mattered less and less. By the end of 1965 the decision to withdraw had been taken, and the question of who ruled South Arabia was gradually taken out of British hands. The Nationalists, in particular the NLF, came to dominate the political scene, and the prime aim of British policy by 1967 was to ensure a safe withdrawal. It is probable that by the time Labour came to power, it was already too late to ensure the survival of the Federation. Drastic measures, such as permitting cross-border retaliation against Yemeni/UAR incursions (which may well have been occurring anyway), might have dented the Nationalists campaign and bolstered the Federal rulers for a time. However, the political scene in both Aden and the Federation had been steadily undermined by the successes of the NLF, the PSP and other groups whose popularity continued to grow.

---

[89] PRO DEFE 11/598/4298 - *A Review of the Situation in South Arabia*, A Note by the Army Department, 8 June 1965

[90] PRO DEFE 11/599/4652 - *Colonial Office to Turnbull*, 24 Sep. 1965

Adeni Politics

The Death of Bayumi

The British refusal to withdraw from Aden was dominated by the view that the base was vital to British overseas commitments, which neither the Conservatives nor Labour at first were willing to cut. Even if Aden was not necessary for the defence of British interests in the Gulf, which the Defence Chiefs had underlined repeatedly as being the case, then to withdraw from Aden would be seen as a surrender to Nasserism and weaken the British Government's position elsewhere in the Middle East[91]. Therefore, whilst the British Government was determined to maintain an overseas role, the east of Suez policy, then Aden was vital to its interests and control there could not be relinquished. However, the British were aware of the need to grant political concessions to the Adenis in order to retain local goodwill. The intended beneficiaries of these concessions were the 'moderate' Colony politicians, in particular Hasan 'Ali Bayumi, the Chief Minister, and generally regarded by the British as the most able of the Adeni politicians. Bayumi, according to Luce and Johnston, was the best man to promote British interests in the Colony, and also the Adeni politician most willing to work with the Federal Ministers

The gradual grants of constitutional advance were, therefore, part of the policy to retain control of the base. It was deemed necessary to make limited concessions in order to give the moderate politicians a chance to undermine the Nationalists' campaigns. However, the PSP/ATUC were a potent force in Adeni politics, albeit as an illegitimate political group. They were able to amass enough support and cause enough trouble to the Aden Government to ensure the moderates had to adopt increasingly Nationalist stances in order to retain any support themselves. The first national government in Aden was formed following the merger with the Federation, and was led by Bayumi as

[91] PRO CO 1055/61/1 - *Letter from William Luce, Political Resident in the Gulf, to Sir Roger Stevens (FO)*, 17 Jan. 1963

Chief Minister, with the majority of the Ministers coming from his UNP group[92]. Fortunately for the British and the new Aden Government, the merger was quietly received, partly because the main figure of the ATUC/PSP, Abdullah al Asnag was in prison and so unable to co-ordinate his group's activities. Even so, the PSP was strengthened by a further amalgamation of unions, the General and Port Workers' Union, the Aden Port Trust Employees' Union and the Civil Aviation Employees' Union into the Transport, General and Port Workers' Union, concentrating power in the hands of the leading Adeni Nationalists.

Aden remained quiet, though, for as long as al Asnag was in jail, permitting the Aden Legislative Council to carry out its work unimpeded for a time. There was still an Opposition within the Legislative Council, however, and it attempted to have elections called before the end of the year, a motion which was defeated[93]. This showed, though, that, even among the moderates, the British were not going to easily get their way, especially with the revision of the franchise and the question of the timing of elections dominating political circles. Even so, with the support of Bayumi, the British Government always had a reasonable chance of success. However, this chance of success was struck a serious blow in April 1963 when the Chief Minister suffered a heart attack[94]. Although he continued to play a small role in Adeni politics for another few months, Bayumi died on 24th June 1963[95]. This was damaging to British hopes, as their policy in Aden politics was centred on Bayumi to a great extent. From his death on the British were left to rely on a succession of politicians who were unable to command the support Bayumi had in the Legislative Council.

Baharun's Attempts to Stay in Power

The new Chief Minister was Sayyid Zain 'Abdu Baharun, who had been Minister of Finance under Bayumi, but was not a member of the UNP, or indeed of any party,

---

[92] PRO CO 1055/62/2 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 1*, Jan. 1963
[93] PRO CO 1055/62/5 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 3*, March 1963
[94] PRO CO 1055/62/9 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 4*, April 1963
[95] Johnston - *op. cit.*, p. 166

which would later undermine his position. Initially, however, Baharun's appointment in July 1963 was generally well received[96]. His endeavours to form an all-party committee to study revision of the franchise met with some success, attracting 7 members - including one from the PSP who had to be referred to as independent as the PSP were both an illegal organisation and unwilling to be openly represented. This limited success increased when the PSP/ATUC nominated seven members to sit on the Joint Advisory Council for Labour Affairs[97]. This could have been an important step towards integrating the Adeni Nationalists into the mainstream, although ultimately nothing really came of it. However, the problem facing both the British and the moderate politicians was that the PSP was looking increasingly likely to win the elections which had to take place once the franchise had been revised. The moderate parties (UNP, PCC) wanted the British to delay the elections until after independence had been granted, whereas the PSP wanted the elections first so that independence could be on their terms[98]. According to Trevaskis, the elections would be dominated by the PSP, which was why he advocated granting Aden independence within the Federation so that the Federal rulers could control a Nationalist Government in Aden[99].

The Federal rulers, however, did not support Baharun and wanted him replaced by the UNP member, Federal Minister and editor of 'Al Yaqdha': Muhammad 'Umar Girgirah. Baharun's main problem was his lack of support from any party or organisation, and so he had to cast himself as "a conciliatory neutral leader", trying to sink political differences and unite all the parties under his leadership in a "National Front" [100]. The Chief Minister believed that Aden should be a one party state, but to achieve this he needed the elections postponed. Furthermore, Baharun wanted Aden to become independent within the Federation, and his own appointment as executive President of Aden State with the dissolution of the Legislative Council and the replacement of its members by his own nominees. Trevaskis admitted that Baharun had had some success in achieving co-operation from among the different political groups

---

[96] PRO CO 1055/62/6 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 7*, July 1963
[97] PRO CO 1055/62/7 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 8*, Aug. 1963
[98] PRO CO 1055/129/128 - *op. cit.*
[99] *ibid.*
[100] PRO CO 1055/129/129a - *Letter Trevaskis to C.G. Eastwood*, 9 Sep. 1963

in Aden, including establishing a good relationship with the PSP, cultivating the PCC leaders and some independents, as well as being close to the SAL (of which he was once a member). However, to achieve all this he had to make, in Trevaskis's view, considerable concessions, including lifting the ban on a number of Egyptian newspapers, appointing Ali Salem Ali (an unofficial PSP member) as Minister for Labour, opposing any resort to repressive measures in Aden, and calling for the return of the exiled SAL leaders. As regards the UNP and the Federal Ministers, Baharun looked to the British "to bring them into line" and avoided conflict with them himself. Overall, Trevaskis thought Baharun would have to be "four faced" to maintain his position posing as: a moderate conciliatory leader to the British Government: a discreet Nationalist to the PSP/SAL; a moderate who would win concessions from the British to the PCC and others; and as an honest and dedicated leader who stood above party politics to the public[101]. However, the High Commissioner found it difficult to believe the Chief Minister could continue to be successful at maintaining all four faces and at some point he would have to choose between Left and Right. Therefore, the British Government should give him what he wanted to avoid the prospect of Baharun going over to the Left and embarrassing the British position.

Baharun's position was crumbling, however, as the UNP turned against him over the misuse of the power of patronage, and the Chief Minister was having to rely on Ali Salem and the PSP to retain power[102]. The alternatives open to the British were not much better, though, since Girgirah was not as popular as Basendwah in Aden, although he had the support of the Federation. The other main option was Khodabux-Khan, who was little more than a compromise candidate, and Trevaskis believed it was better not to rock the boat by dismissing the Chief Minister anyway[103]. Baharun continued to come under attack in the Legislative Council during the first half of 1964, but was helped by the disunity among the UNP, and also the common desire to resist Federal intervention in Aden among all the Ministers. The UNP split was partly fostered by the Chief Minister out of rivalry with Girgirah, but also by the personal and

---

[101] *ibid.*
[102] PRO CO 1055/130/179 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 4 Nov. 1963
[103] PRO CO 1055/130/251 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 18 Dec. 1963

political ambitions of the party's members as they manoeuvred for Ministerial vacancies[104]. The resentment at Federal intervention was not enough, however, to stop ten members of the Legislative Council from signing a letter of no confidence in the Chief Minister in February 1964 as Baharun's support began to disappear[105].

Part of the problem was the State of Emergency which had been declared following the grenade incident at Khormaksar airport on 10 December 1963. This had been the first violent act by the Nationalists within Aden, who had previously relied on strikes and demonstrations, and saw a revival of activity by the PSP/ATUC. The Nationalists' leaders were placed under detention following the attack, but the "less dangerous detainees" were released in an attempt to reduce the pressure on the Chief Minister[106]. This failed since the Aden Ministers all resented the Federation's declaration of the State of Emergency without consultation[107]. Furthermore, the concessions were seen as Britain succumbing to pressure which helped to encourage the opposition. Relations between the Aden Ministers and the Federation continued to deteriorate, and this gave Baharun the chance to revive his position since,

> "Anti-Federation feeling is, of course, immensely strong in Aden and no doubt Baharun is warmly applauded in Aden circles when he is critical of fellow Federal Ministers"[108].

The Chief Minister, however, was still in a precarious situation, despite the continuing internal splits in the UNP, partly due to his own vacillations as he came under pressure over the State of Emergency. Trevaskis believed that Baharun would ask for concessions to take the sting out of the Opposition attacks, such as ending the State of Emergency and getting constitutional reforms[109]. Instead, the Chief Minister tendered his resignation on 11th April, which he then withdrew four days later. Baharun still complained, though, that the British Government's proposed constitutional reforms

---

[104] PRO CO 1055/62/15 - *LIC Aden monthly Intelligence Summary*, Jan. 1964
[105] PRO CO 1055/131/309A - *Acting Governor to Trevaskis*, 8 Feb. 1964 - the ten signatories were Joshi, Husseiny, Hasson, Maqawi, Maqtari, Shihab, Ali Salem, Alwan , Girgirah and Koadel
[106] PRO CO 1055/131/305A - *Letter from Trevaskis to Eastwood*, 5 Feb. 1964
[107] PRO CO 1055/131/266 - *Overseas Policy Committee*, Memorandum by Secretary of State for the Colonies, Annex A, Jan. 1964
[108] PRO FO 371/174480 - *Report of general situation in Aden and the Protectorate*, 27 Feb. 1964
[109] PRO DEFE 11/522/2806 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 13 April 1964

(which were still being debated between Trevaskis and Sandys) were too little, too late[110]. Baharun continued as Chief Minister, and there was some respite with the London conference granting Aden independence within the Federation, which he supported, and was generally well received in the Colony. However, Adeni politics grew more heated after the London conference as the elections approached, with the main question being PSP participation.

Baharun met with both al Asnag and Jifri (the SAL leader) in Cairo in August 1964, and both proposed a coalition government, which the Chief Minister supported as he was anxious to get Nationalist co-operation to help stabilise Aden[111]. However, the PSP was under Egyptian pressure, and eventually boycotted the elections on a party basis, although individual members did stand as independents[112]. The boycott, unlike those in 1955 and 1959, largely failed as there was a 70-75% turnout in the October elections[113]. Another boost to the British was that the majority of those elected were 'moderates' and Baharun was able to form another Government. The "one fly in the ointment", though, was the election of Khalifa Abdullah Hasan Khalifa, with the most votes of any candidate, the man in prison for the grenade attack at Khormaksar the previous December[114]. Fifteen of the sixteen candidates elected campaigned for Khalifa's release, which Greenwood sanctioned, despite the Federal Ministers' opposition, and the issue was yet another bone of contention between Aden and the Federation.

The elections initially appeared to be a victory for the 'moderates' , especially as Baharun was able to from a new State Government on October 30th[115]. Most of those elected were either previous members of the Legislative Council, or gave the impression that they were of similar political persuasions. However, the PSP, despite officially boycotting the voting, still gave covert support to certain candidates, not least Khalifa, who would be expected to support their aims within the Legislative Council.

---

[110] PRO CO 1955/62/26 - *LIC Aden Monthly Intelligence Summary*, April 1964
[111] PRO DEFE 11/500/3448 - *Secretary of State to Acting High Commissioner*, 18 Aug. 1964
[112] PRO CO 1055/33/45 - *Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 19 Sep. 1964
[113] PRO CO 1055/33/75 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 Oct. 1964
[114] PRO CO 1055/33/78 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 18 Oct. 1964
[115] PRO CO 1055/62/33 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Oct. 1964

Moreover, even the 'moderates' were coming under more and more pressure from the Nationalists to contest British policy, and were having to take up more 'radical' stances to ensure support. The situation, despite Trevaskis's first impressions after the elections, had not really been improved for the British Government and its interests in South Arabia. In fact, in under a year, Britain was faced with an openly hostile Aden Government, and was forced to suspend the Constitution in order to retain control in an increasingly volatile situation.

Maqawi and the Suspension of the Constitution

By the end of 1964 the more violent tactics of the NLF were being used in Aden as their urban campaign got underway, creating an increasingly dangerous security situation within the Colony. The British, in response, intensified their use of force and in February 1965 asked the Federal Supreme Council to introduce extra emergency regulations, a move which was blocked by the Aden Members of the Council. According to the new High Commissioner, Richard Turnbull, this move was intended to provoke the Federation into declaring another State of Emergency, thereby further discrediting it and the British Government[116]. The Nationalist campaign, and in particular the NLF, was succeeding in its aim to undermine the Aden Government, resulting in the resignation of the Baharun Government just four months after it took office[117]. Following this, Greenwood suggested to Turnbull that al Asnag should be brought into a National Government, a move which the High Commissioner opposed[118]. He was similarly opposed to the eventual Chief Minister, Maqawi, whose government was sworn in on 7th March and Turnbull's opinion of the new Ministers was not complimentary: "I fear they are a pretty poor lot"[119]. The British Intelligence view of the new Government was that it was "anti-British and anti-Federal", which did not bode well for the future[120].

---

[116] PRO DEFE 11/595/3820 - *Turnbull to Marnham (CO)*, 3 Feb. 1965
[117] PRO CO 1055/63/36 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Feb. 1965
[118] PRO DEFE 11/596/3899 - *Record of Teleprinter discussion between Secretary of State and Turnbull*, 2 March 1965
[119] PRO DEFE 11/569/3913 - *Turnbull to Colonial Office*, 8 March 1965
[120] PRO CO 1055/63/42 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, March 1965

This view was, to a certain extent, supported by the actions of Maqawi, who in April called for the lifting of the State of Emergency, the release of all detainees and the return of political exiles with implementation of the December 1963 UN Resolutions[121]. The Federal Ministers were dismayed by these actions, but the move was favourably received by the Aden Legislative Council, the PSP, the SAL and, according to British Intelligence, "most political and labour extremists"[122]. Maqawi did modify his demands to just negotiations over the future use of the base and a UN presence during elections. However, it was increasingly apparent that the new Chief Minister was not going to make life easy for the British, as he denounced the Constitutional Commission which the British Government had proposed to examine the question of political reform in South Arabia. The open opposition of the Aden Government to the British was having a widespread effect on the civilian and military population in the Colony, lowering morale, which was already seriously damaged by the actions of the NLF.

New Emergency Regulations were introduced in June, and aroused the expected denouncements from Maqawi and the Nationalists, although the reaction among the public and press was comparatively mild[123]. Worse was to follow, however, as the Constitutional Commission was abandoned after the obstructive tactics of Maqawi's Government, although the proposal for a Constitutional Conference in London was accepted[124]. However, at the working party to arrange the Conference, Maqawi and al Asnag again employed wrecking tactics, which the British believed was probably on Egyptian instructions[125]. The Conference was called off, although this was more due to NLF threats against any participants than by Maqawi's obstructions. Even so, the Chief Minister was not popular among British defence chiefs and policy-makers, with the Commander-in-Chief, Middle East, stating that "the first urgent step is to get rid of MacKawee (sic) and his thoroughly useless and dishonest bunch of Ministers by suspending the Constitution"[126]. This was the action that the British did resort to on

---

[121] PRO CO 1055/63/43 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, April 1965
[122] *ibid.*
[123] PRO CO 1055/63/46 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, June 1965
[124] PRO CO 1055/63/49 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, July 1965
[125] PRO CO 1055/63/51 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Aug. & Sep. 1965
[126] PRO DEFE 11/599/4625 - *CinC ME to MoD UK*, 21 Sep. 1965

25th September, blaming the Aden Ministers, in particular Maqawi for their support for the NLF and refusal to condemn "terrorism"[127].

Perhaps surprisingly, Maqawi's reaction was not one of anger, in fact, Turnbull reported that,

> "Far from being indignant or dejected they (Maqawi and his Ministers) were clearly relieved and happy to be quit of their responsibilities. They undoubtedly felt they had got themselves out on to a limb from which they could not return without endangering their lives"[128].

From a British point of view, the suspension of the Constitution was a positive step as Aden got quieter, and the police estimated that about 70% of the population were relieved whilst Arab officials were being co-operative[129]. However, this was only a lull, and there was no real let-up in the NLF campaign against the British (and other Nationalists). Moreover, the British had at that time only announced independence for the Federation. There was no withdrawal planned as yet, and so the British Government still needed some form of government to work with in the Colony. However, this became increasingly unlikely as NLF pressure, and success, left few politicians willing to be seen co-operating with the British, who still needed Aden, albeit preferably under Federal control. This latter policy, though, was looking less and less possible to achieve, not only due to the Adeni politicians, but also because of the reluctance of the Federal rulers to accept political reform.

---

[127] PRO DEFE 11/599/4652 - *Colonial Office to Turnbull*, 24 Sep. 1965
[128] PRO DEFE 11/600/4673 - *Turnbull to CO*, 25 Sep. 1965
[129] PRO DEFE 11/600/4696 - *POMEC (Aden) to FO*, 29 Sep. 1965

Federal Politics

Federal Problems and Weaknesses

The main problem facing the Federation following the accession of Aden into the institution was the effect of the Yemeni revolution on the tribes of the Protectorate. Initially the tribesmen returned from the YAR disillusioned and there were no indications of Yemeni or Egyptian attempts to organise them into a force for dissident activity[130]. The only overt aggression against the Federation at first were violations of airspace by UAR/YAR aircraft as they attempted to take the Royalist-controlled town of Harib on the Yemeni side of the border across from Beihan. This area remained the key point of the Republican-Royalist struggle in the south of the Yemen, and was also the focus for Yemeni incursions across the frontier for most of 1963. However, there was also the problem of subversion within the Federation by Egypt/Yemen-backed forces, which was to become of great concern towards the end of the year as the NLF started its campaign. Before then, though, the number of incidents were minor and, with the exception of Beihan, the frontier remained quiet.

On 14th October 1963, the South Yemeni Revolution was proclaimed by the recently formed NLF in the Radfan mountains, an area which had long been outside of the control of either British or Federal influence[131]. The Radfan would prove to be an embarrassment to both the British and the Federation as successive attempts to bring the dissidents under control and regain the use of the Aden-Dhala road were thwarted by well-organised groups of tribesmen under the banner of the NLF (see below). Whilst the Radfan unrest can be seen as yet another outburst of tribal discontent it was used by the NLF to instigate their 'national revolution'. Whatever the motives (tribal discontent or NLF revolution) for the Radfan revolt, it was the start of four years of continual conflict in the Protectorate which played a large part in undermining the

[130] PRO CO 1055/62 - *op. cit.*

[131] Strictly speaking, the Radfan revolt was yet another outburst of tribal dissidence and was only later adopted by the NLF as the start of the 'South Yemeni Revolution'. NLF propaganda was very effective at claiming tribal revolts as part of their campaign against the Federation and the British.

Federation and possibly forcing the British to withdraw. The trouble spread from the Radfan to other areas as the NLF opened up other fronts in the Protectorate, and the dissidents were effective not only against the Federal forces, but also against British troops as well, including the SAS. The NLF's campaign in the Protectorate, although the only real success was in the Radfan, highlighted the weaknesses of the Federation militarily, and showed how much support (military, financial and political) the Federal rulers needed if they were to survive.

The Radfan was not the Federation's only problems, however, since there was also the question of the relationship with the Adeni Ministers which had deteriorated markedly with the death of Bayumi and the appointment of Baharun. Bayumi had been the main supporter of the merger, and with his passing the doubts and divisions among the Adeni politicians re-surfaced, with Baharun trying to appease different groups at different times. The deteriorating security situation within Aden was also a factor as the Federal rulers felt that neither the British nor the Aden Legislative Council were doing enough to stop the Nationalists. The Federal Ministers were particularly alarmed by the Khormaksar grenade attack and wanted drastic action taken against the Nationalists. Their desire for revenge, however, was frustrated by British Parliamentary "interference" and they were, "irked by the necessity to establish legal evidence to support charges against those believed to be responsible for throwing the hand grenade"[132]. However, their own actions did little to improve relations with the Adeni Ministers, such as imposing the State of Emergency without consultation and opposing the release of detainees, which added to Adeni resentment at Federal intervention[133].

A large part of the problem, though, was lack of funds for the Federation to establish its authority and introduce development projects to make a favourable impression on public opinion[134]. The result of this was that,

---

[132] PRO CO 1055/131/266 - *op. cit.*
[133] *ibid.*
[134] PRO CO 1055/131/305A - *op. cit.*

> "the Federal Government has failed to prove itself either effective or beneficial and has been severely criticised in these respects both in the Federal Council and the local press"[135].

Moreover, the reluctance by the British Government to take retaliatory action against the Nationalists was undermining the relationship between the Federation and Britain, a relationship which was vital to the interests of both parties. The Federal rulers were effectively the British Government's last allies in South Arabian politics after the death of Bayumi, and were necessary if Britain wanted to keep control of Aden even after independence. From the Federal point of view, British military and financial support was the main reason why the Federation had not already disintegrated back into rival states. Furthermore defeat by the Nationalists was a distinct possibility without British support since the Federal forces were incapable of defending the Protectorate from external attack without the support of the British. Admittedly, within the Federation the only British Army troops on active service were in the Radfan/Dhala region and the FRA coped reasonably well with outbursts of dissidence. However, internal dissidence combined with an external assault could well have proved more than the Federal security forces were able to deal with. The uncertain friendship was further tested by the Yemeni air attack on Beihan in March 1964, an action which demanded instant retaliation from the rulers' point of view, but an issue which again divided opinion in London and Aden[136].

The Question of Retaliatory Action

The issue in London was not the undermining of the Federation, but the wider international consequences of a retaliatory attack by British forces against Republican positions within Yemen. The Foreign Office told the defence chiefs that they were not even certain that the Yemeni attack was deliberate whilst by the time the Chiefs of Staff met, they decided it was too late to retaliate for that attack, but that British forces should be prepared to do so in case of future attacks[137]. This brought forth an indignant

---

[135] *ibid.*
[136] PRO DEFE 11/424/2545-7 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 13 March 1964
[137] PRO DEFE 11/424/2558 - *Chiefs of Defence Staff Meeting*, 17 March 1964

response from Trevaskis, who had already criticised British policy on several occasions, and was unimpressed by arguments involving the wider implications. The High Commissioner informed the Colonial Secretary that the Assistant Adviser in Beihan had warned that "tribal leaders now generally believe that we are powerless to do anything" and if the British Government once more fail to act then there was a risk of tribal defection followed by an internal security problem in a traditionally stable area[138]. When Sandys informed Trevaskis that Cabinet Ministers were opposed to a retaliatory attack, the High Commissioner replied that the Government

> "should be made fully aware that the action which they have decided to take will in no degree impress the Federal Rulers or the tribes on whose support they depend ... should we fail to take the only effective course open to us ... we must expect not only protests and accusations at our failure to honour our Treaty obligations but also a general and widespread loss of confidence in the British connection"[139].

Moreover, this had been the third air attack against Beihan since the Yemeni revolution, and there was already an undermining of confidence among the Federal rulers. Trevaskis believed there was a need to hit the Egyptians harder than they were hitting the British and their allies in South Arabia and he was not interested in the view that retaliation could have undermined British interests elsewhere[140]. There was ultimately a volte face by the British Government, two weeks after the initial attack, and a retaliatory air strike against Harib fort was approved[141]. This, in turn, "greatly heartened" the Federal rulers[142]. Other reactions were not as favourable, however, as the Arab League complained, the Yemen called for a UN Security Council meeting and the US was not impressed[143]. From a narrow, and local, perspective, though, the strike did boost the British position among the Federal rulers.

---

[138] PRO DEFE 11/424/2566 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 18 March 1964
[139] PRO DEFE 11/424/2586 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 19 March 1964
[140] PRO DEFE 11/424/2601 - *Martin to Trevaskis*, 20 March 1964 & /2602-3, /2610 - *Trevaskis to Colonial Office*, 20-21 March 1964
[141] PRO DEFE 11/425/2649 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis*, 27 March 1964
[142] PRO DEFE 11/425/2694 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 30 March 1964
[143] PRO DEFE 11/425/2713 - *Minute from Foreign Secretary to Prime Minister*, 1 April 1964

The British retaliation against Nationalist subversion within the Federation, though, was not successful. The Aden-Dhala Road was not secure for travelling and there was a likelihood that by Spring 1964 other Nationalist fronts were about to be opened elsewhere in the Protectorate. These included the possible return of Mohammad Aidrus and the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid to the Federation. Trevaskis, in a letter to Sir Charles Harington, compared the unrest to that of 1954-58, and concluded that the damage could be far worse since the UAR was able to supply far better equipment than the Imam had been able to in the 1950s[144]. Moreover, tribal revolts sponsored by Nasser and in the name of Arab Nationalism were much more menacing "than those which were staged by so grotesque and disreputable a figure as the Imam Ahmad in the name of union with a notoriously backward Yemen"[145]. The problem was that conventional techniques failed because "the rebels can hit us and when they please and we can seldom find them to hit"[146]. In order to counter rebel tactics, therefore, Trevaskis recommended air proscription to pressure the rebels by attacking livestock and making it impossible for a tribal group to carry on living and working in a normal fashion. The High Commissioner admitted that,

> "Air proscription, it is true, has the political disadvantage that its employment gives us a bad Press and earns us international criticism if or when news of it leaks out. The alternative is to let rebellion spread with all the damaging and possibly disastrous consequences which that would entail"[147].

This was a valid point given that Trevaskis's prime concern was to retain British control of South Arabia. However, policy-makers in Whitehall also had to take into account the High Commissioner's own misgivings about the wider ramifications of air proscription.

---

[144] PRO DEFE 11/522/2797A - *Copy of Secret and Personal Letter dated 5th April to Lieut. General Sir Charles Harington from Sir Kennedy Trevaskis*, 5 April 1964
[145] *ibid.*
[146] *ibid.*
[147] *ibid.*

Pressure on the Federal Rulers

The disillusionment with British policy among the Federal rulers gave impetus to their demand for independence and increased responsibility for the government of their own territory[148]. Trevaskis favoured this policy in order to give the Federation some international recognition and the opportunity to act against its enemies without the fear of external interference. Whilst the Federation continued to be dependent on British aid for survival, then this would ensure the preservation of the British Government's interests in the region[149]. The need to counter UAR/YAR subversion was imperative if the Federation was to survive, but little was being done according to both the High Commissioner and the Federal rulers. Moreover, there was plenty of opportunity to exploit the opposition's weaknesses given the internal splits affecting the Nationalists in Aden and the Protectorate (see below), but concern about international repercussions limited British policy.

Eventually the Colonial Office did agree with Trevaskis's proposals to grant Aden independence within the Federation and then to give South Arabia independence at a later date. By June 1964, though, this may well have been too late as the Nationalist campaign was successfully being extended. The pressure on the Federal rulers was mounting, not only from the Nationalists, but also from the British who wanted political reform within the Protectorate, which the rulers did agree to[150]. However, the threat of a Nasser-backed Nationalist victory was enough to force the defection of the Fadhli Sultan to Cairo at the London conference in June 1964. The danger of another security threat, though, was lessened by the appointment of the Sultan's brother Nasir bin Abdullah who had influence among the tribes[151]. The same threat was probably also the reason for the Sharif of Beihan and the Audhali Sultan's worries about the Federation "drifting towards eventual disaster" and considering contacting the SAL leaders to bring them onto the Federal side[152]. Given that the SAL had become a Saudi-

[148] PRO DEFE 11/522/2831 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 20 April 1964
[149] PRO DEFE 11/522/2832 - *op. cit.*
[150] PRO DEFE 11/498/3177 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 3 June 1964
[151] PRO CO 1055/62/30 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, July 1964
[152] PRO DEFE 11/499/3355 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 July 1964

backed organisation by that point, and was nothing like as influential as it had been in the 1950s, this would probably not have achieved much of significance. Nevertheless, it was significant that some rulers were willing to work with their erstwhile opponents.

The situation continued to deteriorate throughout 1964 and 1965, with the repeated warnings of the High Commissioner, the Federal rulers and the defence chiefs being effectively ignored. The WAP Security Committee in its 1965 paper on the threat to the Protectorate reminded the British Government of the necessity to make a political reality of the Federation and to expand Federal forces in order to deal with the worsening security situation. Above all, though, was the need to convince the rulers that Britain intended to remain in Aden at least until the Federation was viable[153]. However, little was done, and with the establishment of the Maqawi Government in Aden things began to deteriorate even further. The Federal rulers were feeling increasingly friendless and uncertain about the future, although a walk out by the Adeni Federal Ministers at a meeting of the Council did enable the rulers to avoid debating the implementation of the UN resolutions[154]. This was a minor respite, though, as the rulers remained uncertain of the continuing support of the British Government and so became less inclined to publicly support the British, which had an effect on the morale of the Federal forces who relied on British aid[155]. The need was for positive steps such as road building, well-digging, the strengthening of Federal forces, and economic investment from the British. However, none were taken, which was only helping the Nationalists in their campaign against increasingly disillusioned opponents.

The situation was not helped by another Yemeni air attack against Beihan in June 1965, which Turnbull wanted to respond to with retaliatory action against the Republican fort at Badiya, rather than simply refer the matter to the UN Security Council[156]. The Federal rulers also wanted action, and the Supreme Council sent a letter to the Colonial Office stating that, "It is felt that retaliation is essential if only because our tribes will realise that we are weak unless they know that we have taken counter-action against the

[153] PRO DEFE 11/595/3818 - *op. cit.*
[154] PRO CO 1055/63/45 - *op. cit.*
[155] PRO DEFE 11/598/4298 - *op. cit.*
[156] PRO DEFE 11/598/4373 - *Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 29 June 1965

aggressor"[157]. However, on this occasion, there was no retaliation as there were too many objections, and Greenwood would only send a "suitable message" to the Supreme Council[158]. The Labour Government, like their predecessors, were accused by the Supreme Council of destroying the Federation politically and undermining the authority of the Federal Government[159]. The Federal accusations were true to a large extent as the failure to successfully challenge the external Nationalist threat coming from the Yemen was harming the Federation, which had insufficient forces to defend itself. However, the British Government were not only afraid of international repercussions to the use of force, but by late 1965 were beginning to consider a complete withdrawal from Aden. Furthermore, the Labour Government were also in favour of a more consensual approach to South Arabian politics, involving the Nationalists in any progress towards a peaceful independence.

However, to the Federal rulers, this was no help, and they wanted action from Britain in order to ensure their survival. Mohammad Farid (Federal Minister of Finance) warned the C-in-C that the Federal opinion of Britain was that it was "neither tough enough nor reliable enough to look after either their (Federal) defence or external affairs"[160]. Moreover, "unless we showed resolution in dealing with that they [i.e. the Federal Ministers] would lose all faith in us"[161]. The Federation was not in a position, however, to threaten the British Government since the Government was the only thing that stood between them and defeat at the hands of the Nationalists. Fortunately for the Federation, the British were also still wanting to ensure its survival. Nevertheless, this was not to be at any cost since the prime importance to the British Government for overseas interests was to ensure that Aden "was comfortably bedded down with the Federation"[162]. This put the Adenis in a stronger position since they were in a better bargaining position as the base was part of the Colony. Despite their disillusion with the British Government, once the constitution was suspended the Federal Ministers still sent a message to the UN defending British policy in South Arabia. The rulers blamed

---

[157] PRO DEFE 11/598/4374 - *Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 29 June 1965
[158] PRO DEFE 11/598/4380 - *Galsworthy (CO) to Turnbull*, 30 June 1965
[159] PRO DEFE 11/599/4619 - *Turnbull to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 20 Sep. 1965
[160] PRO DEFE 11/599/4625 - *op. cit.*
[161] *ibid.*
[162] PRO DEFE 11/601/4796 - *Turnbull to Marnham (CO)*, 23 Oct. 1965

certain Adeni politicians, backed by a "foreign power" (i.e. Egypt), for frustrating progress towards independence[163]. Moreover, the Federal rulers did not just lie back and wait for the Nationalists to achieve victory as in November they went on a tour of Saudi Arabia, Kuwait and Egypt to defend their position, and were given oral promises of assistance in the first two countries[164].

However, by the end of 1965, the worsening British economic situation was forcing a major re-think of overseas policy and Denis Healey, the Secretary of State for Defence, was realising cuts would have to be made to British commitments. This did not necessarily mean the inevitable defeat of a Federation without the British base in Aden to ensure continued support. However, it did mean that new tactics were necessary, including a rapprochement with the Nationalists if at all possible. This was highly unlikely, though, given the series of successes that the NLF and others had had against Federal and British forces in the previous two years. Admittedly the Nationalists had not had it all their own way, but without substantial expansion and re-organisation, the Federal Army was not in a position to defend the Federation on their own given the low morale and poor conditions of service. Moreover, politically the Federation was being outmanoeuvred by the different Nationalist groups who had the popular appeal of Arab Nationalism on their side. In contrast, the unwieldy Federal Government had little real power and was unwilling to implement necessary political reform to make it more popular. Therefore, it seemed unlikely that the Federation could survive independence without British support, which was by no means guaranteed following the 1966 Defence White Paper

Conclusion

One of the major problems facing British officials in South Arabia was the ever-changing attitude of the Government in London towards future policy. The importance of the base was rarely questioned, but the best method of ensuring continued British

[163] PRO CO 1055/63/53 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Oct. 1965
[164] PRO CO 1055/63/54 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Nov. 1965

control was frequently debated. Moreover, by the time that independence was promised in June 1964, the Nationalist campaign was having a greater and greater impact on Adeni and Federal politics as well as the security of the base. The death of Bayumi and the need for the Colony politicians to take into account the popularity of the Nationalists weakened Britain's ability to influence events. However, if British policy was to be maintaining the base at all costs, then the UK did little to help themselves with the half-hearted support given to their closest allies the Federal rulers. The hesitant responses to UAR/YAR incursions of the border, as well as the inability to deal with the NLF revolt in the Protectorate, were undermining the authority of the Federation. The result was that, during 1965, the Nationalist position grew in strength as the Federal position weakened, the difficulty from a British perspective was identifying which Nationalist group was the most dangerous.

Chapter Six: Arab Nationalism in South Arabia

Introduction

The pattern of power politics in the colonies and mandates of the Middle East was generally along the lines of the foreign power granting independence, followed by a period of rule by the local notables and elite, which was nearly always overthrown by a coup or revolution. However, in Aden and the Protectorate, power was passed directly from the colonial power (in this case Britain) straight to the younger, more radical Nationalists (in this case the NLF), bypassing the notables (the Aden 'moderates' and the Federal rulers) entirely. The reasons for this lie partly in the weakness of the Federation and the lack of support it received from the British, but more so because of the strengths (and a certain amount of good fortune) of the Nationalist Liberation Front. The formation of the NLF, who would form the only 'Marxist' regime in the Middle East, needs to be studied to understand how and why they were able to take power. Moreover, the British response, or lack of it, and the attitude of Egypt also need to be examined as they were two more factors in the rise of the NLF.

The Formation of the NLF

Background

The origins of the National Liberation Front (NLF) lay in the wider world of Arab Nationalism, an ideology which grew out of discontent with foreign domination of the Arab world, both political and economic. There were two main bodies which had Arab Nationalism at the core of their ideology: the Ba'ath Party and the Arab Nationalist

Movement (ANM), and both established cells in Aden, the Ba'ath in 1956 and the ANM in 1959[1]. The Ba'ath Party claimed to be socialist, although it was anti-Communist, and developed in Syria in the 1930s and early 1940s as a pan-Arab movement. Whilst the party had success in both Syria and Iraq, it was never a major force in South Arabia, largely because it was confined to Aden's middle and working classes and had minimal impact on the Protectorate. The leaders of the trade union movement in the Colony were linked to the party, with Abdullah al-Asnag writing for the Syrian newspaper 'al-Ba'ath' and Muhsin al-'Ayni acting as the Ba'athi representative for both North and South Yemen[2]. However, following the break up of the Egypt-Syria union (the United Arab Republic) in 1961 and the Yemeni revolution in 1962, the Ba'ath's links to Syria meant the party was largely opposed by Nasser who had become the dominant Arab Nationalist, not just in South Arabia, but in the whole region[3]. Moreover, the fact that the Ba'ath limited their activities to Aden meant that they failed to attract dissidents from the Protectorate. This was a weakness of both the ATUC/PSP and the Ba'ath as it meant they could not compete with the NLF in the mid-1960s as the latter had established small cells throughout South Arabia.

The Arab Nationalist Movement, in fact, was the most important component of the NLF, and it was South Yemeni ANM members who were the leaders and founders of the Front. The ANM was formed in Beirut after the Arab defeat in 1948 by a group of Palestinian intellectuals and the movement spread through the Middle East, although the only state which would be governed by ANM members was South Yemen. The ANM was an influence on Nasser, whose Nasserite socialism in turn dominated the Movement in the late 1950s following Suez. However, in the early 1960s there was a split between the 'left', and anti-Nasser, wing and the 'right', who still supported the Egyptian leader. This split in turn would have a profound effect on the leadership of the NLF. The ANM cell in Aden was mainly composed of students who lived in the Colony, but were originally from the Protectorate, and who returned to the hinterland to spread the Movement's ideology and establish cells. The future leaders of the NLF

---

[1] Lackner, Helen - *P.D.R. Yemen* (Ithaca Press, London, 1985), p. 32 & 36
[2] Kostiner, Joseph - *The Struggle for South Yemen* (Croom Helm, London, 1984), p. 54-5
[3] *ibid.*, p. 56

were nearly all from either the Aden or Cairo cells of the ANM, including Qahtan al-Sha'bi, his brother Faisal Abdul Latif, Taha Muqbil and others[4].

However, the ANM may well have also remained a minor movement in South Arabia, along with the Ba'ath, had it not been for the Yemeni revolution in September 1962. The military coup, whether it was engineered by Nasser or not, meant that Egypt, as the leader of pan-Arab Nationalism could not be seen to be standing by when they were needed by a Nationalist ally. The arrival of Egyptian troops and equipment in North Yemen commenced in October 1962 as the Republicans sought to establish their rule in the face of a Royalist challenge. Moreover, the presence of UAR troops in South West Arabia gave Nasser the opportunity to pressure the British in Aden as well as further establish his Nationalist credentials. However, by Spring 1963, the Republican hold on North Yemen was being severely challenged by the Royalists (with covert British support) who, despite early predictions of collapsing, were maintaining their positions in the mountainous areas of the Yemen. Therefore, a supportive southern flank in South Yemen was seen by Nasser as a means of both aiding the Republicans in their drive against the southern Royalist town of Harib (which was being used by Sharif Hussein of Beihan as a centre for aid for the Royalists), and also of further pressuring the British and their allies in the Federation. It was in this context that the NLF was established out of the ANM cells in both North and South Yemen, as an extra front in Nasser's struggle to establish Egyptian influence in the Arabian Peninsula.

Establishment of the NLF

The formation of the National Liberation Front for Occupied South Yemen (NLF) was announced by Sana Radio on 19th June 1963[5]. This was the achievement of the YAR Ministry of Occupied South Yemen, headed by Qahtan al-Sha'bi, formerly of the Lahej State Council, and consisted of various opposition groups from the Protectorate and Colony[6]. However, beyond these basic facts, British intelligence knew very little of the

[4] *ibid.*, p. 57 & Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 37
[5] PRO DEFE 11/333/1619 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 19 June 1963
[6] PRO DEFE 11/331/1410 - *Johnston to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 21 March 1963

new organisation, other than that a "liberation army" was to be formed by the Ministry[7]. British Intelligence, or rather the lack of it, was to prove to be a major obstacle in the campaign against the NLF. The only information the British received concerned the differences between certain dissident leaders, and very little was ever known about the movement and strengths of the Front's troops. For example, it was known that a liberation army was being formed and that,

> "serious differences have arisen involving Office of South, headed by Qahtan Muhammed al Shabi and dissident leaders and groups over leadership of any future dissident activity in Protectorate"[8].

However, other than the names of a few of the leaders, British Intelligence was almost totally unaware of the organisation of the Front and who were its members, at least until the end of 1965. In fact, the British believed that because of the differences between Qahtan and older dissident leaders such as Muhammad Aidrus and the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid over the leadership of dissident activity, then the Protectorate would remain relatively calm, a belief which would be proved to be very wrong by the end of 1963[9]. Admittedly, the lack of certain knowledge about the formation, motives and activities of the Front was also partly due to the fact that it did not strictly speaking exist as a coherent, disciplined force in 1963. The NLF remained, probably until 1965, an umbrella organisation for numerous different groups and took credit for tribal uprisings that often had little to do with the Front's actions. Nevertheless, British knowledge of the NLF was actually greater than has previously been thought. The security services were not totally ignorant of the Front, but there was still insufficient information about the NLF to combat the threat adequately.

The NLF, unlike the South Arabian League, or the People's Socialist Party, was not as such a political party, rather it was a coalition of ten groups, the most important of which was by far the Arab Nationalist Movement[10]. The leaders of the South Yemeni

---

[7] PRO CO 1055/62/5 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 3*, March 1963
[8] PRO DEFE 11/33/1795 - *Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 31 July 1963
[9] PRO CO 1055/62/6 - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 7*, July 1963
[10] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 53 & Halliday, Fred - *Arabia Without Sultans* (???), p. 191 - the other groups were 'The Nasserite Front', 'The Revolutionary Organisation in the Occupied South', 'The Patriotic

ANM cell, which was based in North Yemen following the September 1962 revolution, went to Cairo in December 1962. After discussions with Nasser, a fighting organisation for the Protectorate was established. Moreover, Nasser instructed Egyptian army headquarters in the YAR at Sana and Ta'izz to aid this Nationalist organisation[11]. In February 1963 at a conference in Sana, attended by over 1,000 representatives of different revolutionary organisations, the first step was taken towards the NLF's formation[12]. The establishment of the Front was then officially confirmed at a further conference in June 1963 and announced on Sana Radio in the same month and then on 'Voice of the Arabs' on Cairo Radio in July[13].

Organisation and Ideology of the Front

In its early stages the NLF was little more than the coalition mentioned above, and had little coherent political ideology to speak of. Its first political statement, announced on Sana Radio in July 1963, underlined this as it concentrated on the need for unity among the various Nationalist groups that existed at the time in South Arabia:

> "Our aspiration in the occupied Yemeni South has now entered a phase which demands a fundamental change in the methods of the struggle to win complete independence and to overcome imperialism. The weakest point is the lack of coordination in the struggle in the Yemeni South as a whole. The reason for this is the lack of a common command for national action in Aden and the Amirates. Another reason lies in the circumstances that the majority of the political organizations limit their activity to Aden. They meet together merely for common opposition; but some political rulers have not been able to raise themselves above narrow party interests to the level of national responsibility"[14].

Other statements were issued reiterating the Front's position, stating that the Federal rulers and Ministers did not represent the people of the South, and so treaties signed by

---

Front', 'The Secret Organisation of Free Officers and Soldiers', 'The Yafi'i Reform Movement', 'Formation of the Tribes', 'The Revolutionary Pioneers', 'The Secret Organisation of the Freemen of Occupied South Yemen' and the 'Mahra Youth Organisation'

[11] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 57

[12] *ibid.*, p. 57 Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 37

[13] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 59 & Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 37

[14] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 192

them were not to be recognised, and demanded the right to self-determination and evacuation of the military bases[15]. However, there was no actual manifesto until the First Congress of the Front at Ta'izz in June 1965, which lasted for three days and adopted a National Charter[16]. The Front declared itself to be the sole representative of the South Yemeni population aimed at "the radical transformation of the social reality created by colonialism" and called for Arab unity[17]. The Charter praised the role of the UAR as the leader of Arab Nationalism, but was also further to the left than any of Nasser's policies, such as denying any role to the "national bourgeoisie" and calling for a social revolution, not just a national one[18].

The First Congress also established a 42-member National Council, first convened in August 1965, and an eight-man executive committee, called the Politburo, including Qahtan and Faisal al-Sha'bi, Taha Muqbil, Salim Zain (the author of the Charter), Ali Salami, and Sayf al-Dali[19]. The Politburo dealt with propaganda, foreign affairs and ideology, but was not the only organ of the NLF, as a 12-man General Command (with half tribal members, and half ANM) a financial body and a military body had also been established[20]. The wider organisation of the NLF was based on small cells throughout the Protectorate, independent of each other but able to work together if necessary. Saleh Musleh Qassem described the structure of the Front and its cells, emphasising the small size of each cell as well as the political instruction given to them by the leaders:

> "The internal party cells were made up of three to five members and there were periodic secret meetings mostly at night. That was the time when the armed commandos would tour the villages and meet with each of the organisation's secret cells separately. During such meetings they would clarify the latest developments, gather information, assign tasks and distribute pamphlets, as well as gather contributions for the National Front Political Organisation ... No cell knew of the others except in extraordinary circumstances related to security. A member joining any of the secret cells of the Organisation had to go through a probationary period of six months at the most before being accepted as a full member."[21]

---

[15] *ibid.*, p. 193
[16] *ibid.*, p. 193 & Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 58 & Lackner - *op. cit.*, pp. 40-2
[17] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 40
[18] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 194
[19] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 58 & Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 40
[20] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 58
[21] Lapping, Brian - *End of Empire* (Granada, London, 1985), p. 295

This meant that on the rare occasion that a Front member was captured by British Intelligence, he could only inform on his own cell, not the entire NLF.

Whilst the NLF had been established as an umbrella organisation for different groups, cutting across political ideologies, increasingly the ANM was the only name to be heard. The Front had become a party organisation dominated by the Arab Nationalist Movement, the early tribal members were expelled, and the only divisions were in effect between two wings of the ANM. However, this did not limit the Front's efficacy, largely because of the support of Nasser and the UAR until 1965, a link which permitted the supply and financing of the NLF's activities to continue. There was other support, including from the Arab League, which created a fund to aid the NLF, and Qahtan was to claim that as well as Egyptian support, there was also help from Iraq, Algeria, Kuwait and other Arab states[22].

Whilst the organisation of the NLF and its external support were vital to its success, the other factor for the success of the Front was its doctrine of the violent struggle against the colonial power. The NLF adopted the concept of the popular armed struggle as a means to improve its morale and solidarity, which, according to Kostiner, explains why there was continued fighting after Britain had announced its withdrawal in February 1966[23]. Another reason for the continued fighting was simply because the inter-Nationalist struggle had not been resolved, between the NLF and the Egyptian-backed Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY), a struggle which continued until November 1967 (see below and Chapter 7).

The establishment of the National Liberation Front was a key development in the final years of British rule in South Arabia. However, at the time it was largely overlooked by the authorities in Aden, a situation which continued effectively until it was too late to do much about the Front. Whilst the NLF started life as a broad coalition, representing different Nationalist and tribal organisations, by the time of its First Congress in June 1965 the Front was effectively an Arab Nationalist Movement offshoot. This link to

[22] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 59
[23] *ibid.*, p. 67

the ANM provided a coherent ideology, but would also prove divisive. However, the divisions were largely kept from the British, and even the Egyptians, enabling the NLF to maintain at least a unified facade in its campaign against the Federation.

The Radfan Revolt

The 'National Revolution'

According to the NLF, their military campaign against the British and the Federation commenced in the Radfan mountains in the Amirate of Dhala, on the 14th October 1963. However, this was not strictly speaking the case, as the 'revolution' was actually an existing tribal revolt by the Qutaybi, whose leader had been killed whilst resisting the British[24]. Nevertheless, the NLF did take over the leadership of the revolt, and turned the Radfan mountains into the centre of their first front against the British. The British themselves did not realise that this was anything other than another outburst of tribal dissidence as in October 1963 they still believed that the NLF still had little influence due to continuing differences over the leadership[25]. Moreover, their Intelligence lead them to believe that the Radfanis had been rebuked by the Yemeni Republicans for starting trouble too soon, and that there had been no progress on the formation of a liberation army[26]. However, whether the revolt was instigated by the NLF or not was ultimately of little importance as the Radfan revolt grew into a major source of concern for both the British and their allies in the Federation.

The Radfan mountains were strategically important for both sides in the struggle due to their position overlooking the Aden-Dhala Road, and their proximity to the Yemeni border. The British needed the road for security purposes in the area, and also to supply

---

[24] *ibid.*, p. 71 - There is some doubt as to whether the patrol in question was actually a British one, according to an Aden Government official it was actually a Federal patrol the Qutaybi were resisting and the NLF leadership only took over and added political ideology after the event.
[25] PRO CO 1055/62/9A - *Resume of Aden Intelligence Summary No. 10*, Oct. 1963
[26] *ibid.*

the Amir of Dhala, a member of the Federation. The road continued to Bayda in the Yemen, however, and so was also a source for supplies for the NLF from the Republicans to the north. The NLF exploited the tribal revolt to their own ends, and claimed to target the whole Federation, rather than just the Amir as the Qutaybi usually did, a claim that was only fulfilled later in the campaign. Their methods were adopted from the traditional tactics of small scale surprise attacks, using their superior knowledge of the geography of the area to ambush convoys on the road, and then quickly disappear into the mountains[27]. However, whilst the cause of the revolt, and certain of its tactics, was tribal, the actual revolt was not defeated in the usual short period of time. This was partly due to the improved organisation of the dissidents, but more because of the supply of Egyptian arms, in particular mines. The British were not expecting an organised, trained, and also 'multi-tribal' force, and so were surprised by the duration of the revolt:

> "This is the first occasion on which uniformed rebels have appeared on the scene and the first also within my experience when rebels have operated in a tribal area other than their own. This would be the first attempt to put a unit of the so-called Liberation Army into the field"[28].

Trevaskis's conclusion was greeted with doubt by the Colonial Office, with the Secretary of State surmising that the most likely explanation was that the rebels had simply received the uniforms from the Republican National Guard rather than being an "organised military unit"[29]. In fact, according to the Political Officer in Dhala at the time, the 'Liberation Army' was basically a Qutaybi force, bolstered by a few Amiris from Dhala, and so was not really a 'multi-tribal' force. Nevertheless, what cannot be argued with was the duration of the rebellion which had already lasted four months by that point. The British attitude, however, was to continue to treat the revolt as tribal, which given the usual short-term nature of tribal revolts in South Arabia, was somewhat careless.

---

[27] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 71
[28] PRO DEFE 11/423/2388 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 28 Jan. 1964
[29] PRO DEFE 11/423/2404 - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis*, 29 Jan. 1964

The British Response: 'Operation Nutcracker' and 'Radforce'

The ability of the NLF-led revolt to impede travel on the Aden-Dhala Road for three months meant that some form of British response was necessary, and so 'Operation Nutcracker' was initiated in December 1963. 'Nutcracker' was composed of three Federal Regular Army (FRA) battalions with British officers and RAF support who moved into the Radfan to subdue the area[30]. The tactic of using force was questioned at the time since,

> "There were many local officials, with a profound knowledge of the Arabs, who believed strongly that any attempt to subdue the tribes by force was doomed to be a waste of time and effort"[31].

The doubts were ignored, but proved to be correct as, although the FRA did succeed in occupying parts of the Radfan after suffering losses, they were isolated wadis which needed supplying from the air and came under heavy attack from the NLF[32]. Moreover, as soon as the FRA were withdrawn in order to defend the frontier, the tribes quickly re-occupied the Radfan, necessitating another British operation[33].

There were several reasons for the success of the NLF in the Radfan in the first few months of the campaign. The British-led Federal forces were severely hampered by their lack of intelligence about their opponents and there were insufficient numbers to penetrate into such difficult terrain. Moreover, the NLF guerrillas were fighting a new type of campaign that neither the British nor the FRA were used to in South Arabia. The object of the Front was not to win territory and then hold their ground, but to harass their opponents and weaken them politically[34]. Therefore, as soon as the FRA moved out in March 1964, the NLF moved back in, re-occupying the Wadi Rabwa on the 21st March, one of the two spots the Federal forces had eventually succeeded in subduing[35].

---

[30] Geraghty, Tony - *Who Dares Wins: The Story of the SAS, 1950-1980* (William Collins, Glasgow, 1980), p. 83 & Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 196

[31] Geraghty, Tony - *op. cit.*, p. 83 - the quote is from Julian Paget who was a British officer serving in Aden at the time

[32] Halliday - *op. cit.*, pp. 196-7

[33] *ibid.*, p. 197 & Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 72

[34] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 196 & Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 73

[35] PRO CO 1055/62/17 - *LIC Aden Monthly Intelligence Summary*, March 1964

Moreover, once again the Aden-Dhala Road was deemed no longer secure by the British because the area was under rebel control[36]. The situation demanded some form of action from the British if they and the Federation were to retain any credibility.

Moreover, even when territory was recovered by the Federal forces, the tribes were still able to cause them enough trouble to warrant further operations by the British. These took place from April to June 1964 with a mixed force amounting to a brigade of Federal and British troops again with RAF support, including helicopters, and a squadron of tanks[37]. This 'Radfan Force' ('Radforce') aimed to use Paratroopers and Royal Marine Commandos to capture certain peaks in order to allow the rest of the force to move into the Radfan. However, at first the operation was something of a disaster as an attempt by the SAS to penetrate the Radfan on the night of the 29/30 April 1964, in order to secure a 'drop zone' for the Paratroopers, went wrong with the loss of two men and the failure to achieve their goal[38]. This in turn forced the British to call for reinforcements from the UK since it was felt that they could no longer rely on the FRA in the face of a stronger, better organised and better equipped force[39]. The loss of the two SAS men finally seemed to convince the British that they were no longer dealing with the usual tribal revolt as they witnessed the significant improvements in 'rebel' discipline, fire accuracy, the large number of automatic weapons they possessed and the fact that all the attackers seemed to be wearing a uniform[40].

However, this was in reality over six months too late to grasp the facts of the situation. The excuse given by the Army for the failure to at least contain the Radfan revolt was that,

> "We have not got the forces to deal with it and as some of you have seen, the terrain is exceedingly rugged and we would soon lose a regiment of soldiers here against these guerrillas in the wide open spaces around these mountains and in the very deep wadis"[41].

---

[36] PRO DEFE 11/425/2756 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 7 April 1964
[37] Geraghty - *op. cit.*, p. 86
[38] *ibid.*, pp. 87-99 & de la Billiere, General Sir Peter - *Looking for Trouble* (Harper Collins, Glasgow, 1994), pp. 219-222
[39] PRO DEFE 11/497/2912 - *CinC ME to MoD*, 1 May 1964
[40] PRO CO 1055/62/26 - *LIC Aden Monthly Intelligence Summary*, April 1964
[41] PRO DEFE 11/497/2941 - *HQ ME to MoD*, 3 May 1964

This was not the whole truth, though, as a combination of over-confidence and underestimating the ability of their opponents was at least as much to blame. The commanding officer of the SAS squadron involved in the Radfan in April 1964, (later General Sir) Peter de la Billiere, who had served as an Intelligence Officer with the Federal Army, admitted that,

> "We did not appreciate the intensity of the violence of the tribal reaction to our presence. I expected a few dissidents to pop off a few rounds and then go home again ... So often, we underrate our enemy"[42].

The lack of Intelligence about the strength of the opposition was another factor weakening the British campaign, one member of the SAS later commented that,

> "In those early days of the Radfan campaign, no one knew anything about what would be needed. They didn't know whether there was water up in the hills, or anything about the people"[43].

The combination of these factors meant that the attempt to impose Federal rule on the Radfan took far longer than expected, and proved far costlier than was desirable. Eventually, in June 1964, the Radfan mountains were subdued, albeit temporarily, after the Qutaybis were defeated at their centre of Jabel Hurriyah[44]. This, though, was not the end of the NLF campaign, nor even the end of the Radfan revolt, which continued off and on until the British withdrawal.

Military means were simply not enough, a lesson which some, although not all, within the British colonial and military establishment never really learned. Trevaskis believed that the only lasting solution to the dissidence was "by repaying the Yemen two-fold in kind", which was something of a short-term view, and not necessarily bound to succeed[45]. There were complaints, however, from the Army that whilst they were imposing Federal rule by force, nothing was being done politically and economically to

---

[42] Geraghty - *op. cit.*, p. 83
[43] *ibid.*, p. 86 - according to the Political Officer who briefed the SAS patrol, lack of intelligence was not the problem, rather it was over-confidence and carelessness
[44] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 72
[45] PRO DEFE 11/522/2860 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 23 April 1964

support military methods. The Commander-in-Chief of Middle East forces, Lieutenant-General Sir Charles Harington, informed the Chiefs of Staff in June 1964 that, whilst the operations were coming to an end, "the situation cannot be restored until the political aim [the tribes submitting to the Federation] has been achieved"[46]. Moreover, he was of the opinion that,

> "If the Federation had been given more financial help in the past the temptation to the Radfanis to go elsewhere for the price of subversion might have been avoided. The money thus paid out would have been the insurance premium I know so many governors in the past have asked for"[47].

The General also wanted permission to use his troops to correct the situation "by beating their bayonets into plough shares", which was eventually done, but once again came too late to stop the decline of the Federation[48].

The Radfan revolt, even though British and Federal forces had finally succeeded in subduing it, should be regarded as a victory for the NLF. The Front had failed to 'liberate' any territory, or even inflict unacceptable losses on the British forces, but these are not criteria by which the revolt should be judged. Whilst the Qutaybis were forced to make peace with the Federation and so could be seen as failing to achieve their aim of conquering the Radfan, the NLF had different ambitions. The Front were not aiming to conquer the Radfan, rather to embarrass the British and/or Federation, and increase their own reputation. They proved to be a significant burden on their enemies' forces and they disrupted law and order sufficiently to warrant the sending of reinforcements twice ('Radforce' and then further troops were sent from the UK after the failed SAS mission). Moreover, and most importantly, they were able to become a constant irritant to the British and the Federation, not just in the Radfan, but throughout the Protectorate as they extended their campaign to other areas of traditional tribal dissidence.

---

[46] PRO DEFE 13/570/2 - *Letter CinC ME to CoS*, 11 June 1964
[47] *ibid.*
[48] *ibid.*

According to Kostiner, the NLF's greatest success was by using "fluidity of force" tactics to open other fronts whilst still maintaining the Radfan campaign[49]. There is a lot of truth in this, as during 1964 the Front were to exploit other tribal revolts, just as they had done with the Qutaybis in Radfan. Moreover, the other fronts were also able to harass the Federal and British forces in the same way that the Radfan front did, even though the British were well aware that the NLF was attempting to spread its campaign into other parts of the Protectorate.

Trevaskis estimated that there were about 4,000 armed tribesmen in Dhala (of whom 500 were certainly disaffected), 3,000 in Haushabi (1,000 disaffected) and 3,000 in Subaihi (500 disaffected)[50]. Moreover, if the situation deteriorated in the Radfan, then the British could expect these other areas to cause trouble, and, "If things go badly in Dhala, Haushabi, and Subeiha then we could expect disaffection to spread throughout the population of the whole area"[51]. As things turned out, this prediction held a lot of truth, as the NLF did succeed in stirring up dissent in other parts of the Protectorate. The first expansion was in Fadhli and Dathina, the 'Middle front', which was announced by the NLF via Sana Radio on 28th June 1964[52]. As the British and Federal forces were in the process of completing their mission in the Radfan, Dathina became the centre of the NLF's activities. Reports came through once more of the opposition's better planning and co-ordination, accuracy of fire, and increased determination with which the attacks on Federal Guard posts were carried out[53]. From then on, the NLF almost continually expanded their activities, causing Federal and British forces constant trouble, and threatening security in the Protectorate.

---

[49] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 72
[50] PRO DEFE 11/497/3025 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 10 May 1964
[51] *ibid.*
[52] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 73 & PRO DEFE 11/499/3274 - *Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 29 June 1964, & PRO CO 1055/62/27 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, June 1964
[53] PRO DEFE CO 1055/62/30 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, July 1964

After Dathina, the western front moved from Radfan and was opened in Dhala, which then spread into Haushabi (as Trevaskis had predicted) from August 1964[54]. The effects of Egyptian training were taking their toll on the British and Federal forces as the ability to mount simultaneous operations against widely separate targets, with ambushes or mines laid along the likely reinforcement routes, were bringing the NLF considerable success[55].

As NLF campaigns spread the security situation continued to deteriorate with the British repeatedly remarking on the sophistication and efficacy of their opponents[56]. The British themselves used tactics which, according to Halliday, they would repeat in Dhofar, albeit to better effect, as the use of air proscription to 'deny an area to the enemy' was implemented[57]. The tactic of destroying crops and bombing villages (after first dropping leaflets to tell the villagers to get out) was effective in Radfan, albeit highly controversial, raising criticism from both the media and the House of Commons, but ultimately failed[58]. Whilst the Radfan mountains were eventually cleared, it had taken over six months and inflicted casualties on both the FRA and the British Army. Moreover, the NLF had succeeded in tying down thousands of troops and they were able to initiate fighting in twelve other areas of the Protectorate (according to Kostiner). The Front made themselves a constant thorn in the side of the Federation and the colonial authorities in Aden, obstructed the supplies for British forces, and also cut supplies to the Royalists in the Yemen. These achievements were considerable, causing serious damage to the Federation and the credibility of the British, as well as aiding the Republican cause in the north. The NLF were branded as "terrorists" by the British, and the tactics they used were similarly condemned (although the British tactics were at times no better). Admittedly, the troubles of the mid-1960s were possibly no more serious in terms of military success than those of the mid-1950s since no forts were captured or serious casualties inflicted upon British or Federal forces. However, the

---

[54] PRO CO 1055/62/31 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Aug. 1964 & PRO CO 1055/62/32 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Sep. 1964
[55] PRO CO 1055/62/31 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Aug. 1964
[56] *ibid.*, pp. 72-3 & PRO DEFE 11/523/3739 - *Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 1 Jan. 1965
[57] Halliday - *op. cit.*, pp. 197-99 & PRO DEFE 11/497/3013C - *Secretary of State for the Colonies to Trevaskis*, 8 May 1964
[58] *ibid.*

Front's actions had a symbolic effect, raising the price which the authorities were willing to pay to remain in power:

> "terrorism has usually been adopted not as a method to obtain immediate military gains, but rather because of its cumulative effect. It has a deleterious effect on society and makes it difficult for the government to function"[59].

This was very true of the situation in South Arabia, especially when the NLF turned their attention on the Colony of Aden itself.

The Urban Campaign

The NLF in Aden

The NLF's tactics in the Protectorate were primarily designed to destabilise the Federation whilst also embarrassing the British. The campaign in Aden, however, was directed with the aim of driving out the colonial power. The extension of the Front's activities to the Colony took place in the summer of 1964, at the same time as other fronts were being opened in the Protectorate, thereby creating widespread unrest. This was a new situation for the authorities to deal with, an organisation which was active in both the Colony and Protectorate, whereas previously the Nationalist groups had only been active in one or the other. Moreover, by undermining the security situation in Aden, the NLF were maintaining pressure on British troops which might well have otherwise been used either in the Protectorate or elsewhere in the Middle East.

The number of security incidents within Aden was to rise remarkably during the last three years of British rule, although not all were caused by the NLF. There were 36 in 1964, which increased to 286 in 1965, then 510 in 1966 and finally approximately

[59] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 73

2,900 by November 1967[60]. The different Nationalist groups used grenade attacks against gatherings of people (parties, cafes, cinemas), bombed vital installations (including the oil refinery), and assassinated leading public figures, in particular Police Special Branch officers[61]. This last activity was especially effective, with the successful assassination of a Special Branch Officer in December 1964, followed by two unsuccessful attempts in January 1965, creating low morale among the Arab officers[62]. This intimidation reached the point where the Special Branch effectively ceased to function, which, according to the British, was one probable reason why the interrogation of NLF suspects yielded nothing on the Front's cells within Aden[63]. The other reason was more to do with the NLF's structure, whereby individual cells were separate from others so that if one cell was identified, it could not reveal information on another cell. However, the campaign against the Special Branch was just as effective, in particular after the defection of the Arab Deputy Superintendent Hubaishi to the Yemen (and then to Cairo) in February 1965[64]. Hubaishi was the final Arab officer within Special Branch, and his defection lead to a further drop in morale, and the drying up of all sources on the NLF as the public were too scared of informing, even had they so desired[65]. It was clear to the British that the NLF were demoralising Adeni society, including the politicians and civil servants, as the security situation became increasingly unstable[66].

Furthermore, the NLF's campaign by 1965 included the penetration of the Federal security forces, increasing the unreliability of the FRA and the Aden Police from a British point of view[67]. The Commander-in-Chief was worried about the morale of both the Federal and British troops as indications of Nasserite and NLF sympathies became clear, a situation that he blamed on "our pitiful weakness and indecision"[68]. The British attitude to the NLF urban campaign was, in fact, characterised by

---

[60] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 202
[61] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 74-5
[62] PRO CO 1055/63/34 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Jan. 1965
[63] *ibid.*
[64] PRO CO 1055/63/36 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Feb. 1965
[65] *ibid.*
[66] PRO DEFE 11/596/3891 - *Turnbull to Colonial Office*, 1 March 1965
[67] PRO DEFE 11/599/4599 - *Situation Report w/e 13 Sep. 1965*
[68] PRO DEFE 11/599/4625 - *CinC ME to MoD UK*, 21 Sep. 1965

indecision, the clearest example being that the Front was not even outlawed until July 1965[69]. Moreover, there was no co-ordination of the different counter-intelligence bodies (Special Branch, the Army, Colonial Office) until June 1965, from which point there actually was an improvement in the British operations against the NLF. The number of incidents in August 1965 was 40 (the highest so far), but this dropped to 29 in September following the arrest of over 30 "known terrorists"[70]. The security forces were also able to seize NLF documents and plans and their main printing press in Aden[71]. However, as the Intelligence Summary pointed out, the NLF were relying increasingly on their gunmen, so the drop in the number of incidents "was offset by the quality of several of their acts". These included the assassination of the British Speaker of the Legislative Council, of a senior British Special Branch Officer, and of another Arab police officer[72].

Nevertheless, the security forces were still able to hamper NLF activities in Aden towards the end of 1965, especially after the capture of the Aden Commander, Ali Abdul Alim in October 1965[73]. The nature of the Front's organisation, though, meant that other cells were still able to carry out attacks, albeit 'only' 18 in November 1965. Furthermore, despite continued pressure from the security forces, the Crater murder squad (a NLF cell responsible for numerous attacks on British servicemen) was also reactivated which further threatened the stability of the colony[74]. The seizure of Chinese, Soviet and Egyptian arms and explosives was also a blow to the Adeni NLF cause at the end of 1965[75]. These setbacks did harm the Front, but were not enough to do so seriously. The NLF probably did themselves more harm with their internal struggles and divisions which weakened the campaign against the British and the Federation as well as questioning the unity of the Nationalists.

---

[69] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 75
[70] PRO CO 1055/63/51 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Aug. & Sep. 1965
[71] *ibid.*
[72] *ibid.*
[73] PRO DEFE 11/601/4813 - *MELF to MoD (Army)*, 31 Oct. 1965
[74] PRO CO 1055/63/54 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Nov. 1965
[75] PRO DEFE 11/601/4892 - *Ashworth to Noakes (CO)*, 28 Dec. 1965

The structure of the NLF was a major benefit when a cell was broken by British and Federal security forces, but was also a weakness as it meant there were many cell leaders outside the direct control of the Politburo. At first, the Front was an umbrella organisation, exploiting existing conditions of unrest to further their aims. To this end, different groups were relied upon according to the needs of the time and area, thus in the Protectorate it was mainly tribes and peasants, in Aden it was the more educated elements of society[76]. Above these groups, the NLF leadership would impose themselves, acting as the ideological and commanding elite of the fighting bodies which allowed them to control the rank and file[77]. The actual NLF members of a group would also be distinguished from the rank and file by functioning as political directors and staff officers[78].

However, a rift emerged between the cells in the Protectorate and the elite leaders, partly due to the attempt to merge the NLF with other Nationalist groups (see below), but also due to conditions within the Front itself, and within the ANM as a whole. The leaders were accused by the cells of concentrating on diplomatic affairs whilst the rank and file were risking their lives in the Radfan and elsewhere[79]. Moreover, a group of more militant NLF members had emerged from the cells, men who had fought the British and Federal forces, but were not going to the conferences in Cairo, Sana and elsewhere that the elite were attending, again causing resentment. These cell leaders were more concerned with the immediate tactical and organisational problems that the NLF faced during their campaign, and were not impressed by leaders like Qahtan al-Sha'bi who was not a military commander. Another element was the radicalisation of some of the Adeni cells through their contacts with the Communist People's Democratic Union (PDU)[80]. The combination of these factors produced what was known as the 'secondary leadership', which in January 1966 claimed the supreme

---

[76] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 76
[77] *ibid.*, p. 76
[78] *ibid.*, p. 77
[79] *ibid.*, p. 119
[80] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 208

command of the NLF whilst others from the elite leadership were in Cairo for the creation of the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY, see below, Chapter 7). The 'secondary leadership' was composed of some already high ranking members, such as Abd al-Fattah Isma'il, Muhammad ali Haytham and Ali 'Antar (commander of the Radfan NLF), but others were more obscure[81]. This new leadership had sided with the 'radical' Ibrahim faction of the ANM (the 'left') at the Beirut conference in 1964 (along with the North Yemen ANM delegation). Qahtan and the 'official' NLF leadership, on the other hand, had sided with the more moderate and pro-Nasser Habbash group (the 'right')[82]. Moreover, most of the 'secondary leadership' were from the well-educated Aden intelligentsia that the ANM had recruited, a move which then proved counter-productive[83]. They were also younger and less attached to Nasser, more influenced by Marxist and Maoist ideology (hence the adherence to the concept of the popular armed struggle) and less willing to follow the orders of Cairo.

The old leaders defeated the 'secondary leadership' at the NLF's First Congress in June 1965, but the issue of joining FLOSY fully exposed the rift between leaders such as Qahtan al-Sha'bi and Salim Zain and the rank and file. The 'secondary leadership' took over the Politburo at a conference in Ta'izz in January 1966, expelling those that joined FLOSY, and a resolution was signed declaring Nasser to be an "Arab imperialist"[84]. Whilst peace was restored between Qahtan and the 'secondary leadership' towards the end of 1966, certain members were not permitted to return as the merger with FLOSY was rejected completely, ensuring the NLF lost Nasser's support. The 'secondary leadership' was in reality simply a confirmation of the radicalisation of the NLF, as certain tribal leaders had already been expelled "for having a mercenary attitude"[85]. The old leaders like the al-Sha'bi brothers had lost touch with the NLF cells who were carrying out the fighting and adopting their own ideology based on their experiences. They were also able to continue their military campaigns at the same time, despite the internal splits and the denial of Nasser's support. Moreover, the British remained

[81] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 120
[82] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 209
[83] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 120-1
[84] *ibid.*, p. 124
[85] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 209

unaware of the split, believing that Qahtan was the leader throughout, and that it was he who refused to join FLOSY rather than the 'secondary leadership'.

Nationalist Rivalry

The Influence of Nasser and the Yemeni Civil War

The position of Gamel Abd al-Nasser as figurehead for Arab Nationalism had been established by Egypt's stance against the British and French during the Suez crisis in 1956. This had been further cemented by the union with Syria in 1958 , creating the United Arab Republic (UAR), a name which was still used for Egypt after the split with Syria in 1961. Thus, Egypt was able to influence and direct other Arab Nationalist groups elsewhere in the Middle East, in particular the Arab Nationalist Movement. The high prestige accorded to Nasser, however, was a hindrance as well as a benefit, since it meant that the UAR had to shoulder the burden of fighting 'colonialism' and 'imperialism' in the Middle East, the 'reactionary' Arab regimes (by which was meant the more conservative monarchies of states such as Jordan and Saudi Arabia), as well as Israel. Therefore, when a group of army officers staged a coup against the Imam in Yemen in September 1962, they naturally turned to Nasser and Egypt for support in the ensuing civil war.

It is difficult to establish whether the Egyptian leader knew of the coup beforehand, as some colonial officials and historians have claimed, but once it had taken place, Nasser had no option but to get involved. The secession of Syria from the UAR a year earlier had damaged Nasser's prestige as leader of Arab Nationalism, and the Yemeni civil war provided an opportunity to re-establish his Nationalist credentials. Therefore, within a fortnight of the coup, Egyptian troops and equipment had landed in Yemen to bolster Sallal's Yemen Arab Republic (YAR). Unfortunately for Nasser, the Royalists proved very effective at resisting Republican and Egyptian advances, in particular in the

mountains of north and east Yemen, which meant that an ever-increasing number of UAR troops were stationed in the towns. Most historians estimated that at least a third of Nasser's army (approximately 40,000 troops) was involved in the Yemen by 1967, which proved to be a serious liability during the Six Day War of June that year when Israel overran the Sinai peninsula[86]. Despite such large numbers of troops, the Royalists maintained their positions, and at times pushed the UAR and YAR forces back, embarrassing the numerically superior and better-armed Egyptian army and its leader Nasser.

The success of the Yemeni Royalists in their Spring 1963 offensive was actually a help to the NLF as it gave an impetus to Nasser to establish a southern front to cut off links between the Federation and the Yemen, as well as create trouble for the British in Aden. This southern front turned out to be the NLF in Radfan and then elsewhere in the Protectorate, but even their successes were not enough to sufficiently damage the Royalists. Despite these setbacks, Nasser was still a vital source of inspiration, as well as supplies, for the vast majority of Nationalists. Arms, equipment and training all came from Egypt, which meant that in theory the NLF and other groups should not have been able to survive as an effective force in South Arabia without Nasser's backing. This was true as far as men like Abdullah al Asnag of the PSP/ATUC were concerned, albeit it was the propaganda value that was important to him given his opposition to an armed struggle. Moreover, it was also true of Qahtan al-Sha'bi and the other leaders of the NLF up to 1966, who were tied to Nasser through the ANM, but far less true of the younger, more radical 'secondary leadership' that emerged from the Front's cells during 1965.

Thus, when Nasser wanted increased control of, and unity between, the separate Nationalist organisations in South Arabia, he was able to exert sufficient pressure on the PSP and other dissident groups to form the Organisation of the Liberation of the

---

[86] Precise numbers are not known, for example: Kerr - *op. cit.*, p. 96 & Mansfield - *op .cit*, p. 272, state there were 40,000 troops; Yapp - *op. cit.*, p. 296 & Kelly, J.B. - *Arabia, the Gulf and the West* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1980), p. 26, state there were around 70,000 Egyptian troops in the Yemen by 1965 but the number was later reduced; and O'Ballance, Edgar - *The War in the Yemen* (Archon Books, Hamden, 1971), p. 153, puts the figure at 60,000 by November 1966

Occupied South (OLOS, see below). However, Qahtan and the NLF remained aloof at first, although representatives of the Front were at the first OLOS conference in April 1965[87]. This situation was still not acceptable to Nasser, however, as the Egyptian intelligence services exerted further pressure on the NLF to merge with OLOS. The leadership of the Front did seem to succumb in January 1966, with the creation of the Front for the Liberation of South Yemen (FLOSY), but this move was totally rejected by the 'secondary leadership'. Despite continuing pressure, the NLF did remain separate from FLOSY, a move which caused the loss of Egyptian support, and therefore of arms and equipment, but the Front continued to exist, surviving on political contributions and robbing banks[88]. Ultimately, the split with the UAR worked in the NLF's favour, as defeat in the Six Day War meant that Egyptian troops withdrew from the Yemen, causing severe problems for FLOSY in the fight to win power in an independent South Arabia.

Nasser and the UAR played a vital role in the Nationalist campaign against the British in Aden and the protectorate. However, Egyptian involvement in the Yemen also tarnished Nasser's reputation, not only because of his forces' inability to defeat the Royalists. Many of the Republicans in the north grew to resent the Egyptian presence, so much so that there were attempted moves to make peace with the Royalists. These moves failed, largely because of Egyptian opposition, yet at the same time, Nasser also made attempts to force a settlement in the civil war through peace talks with Saudi Arabia, a move which alienated the 'secondary leadership' and played a part in their rejection of OLOS and FLOSY. Therefore, whilst Egypt was an important player in both the Yemeni civil war and the Nationalist campaign against the British, Nasser was still not able to achieve control of either regime when the conflicts were over. This was partly due to the Six Day War, but in the south it was more due to the NLF's refusal to become Egyptian puppets, an accusation leveled against certain Nationalists, in particular Abdullah al Asnag.

---

[87] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 114
[88] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 213

Since the mid-1950s, the trade unions, and subsequently their party the PSP, had been the prominent Nationalist organisation in Aden. The British viewed the PSP, and its leading light Abdullah al Asnag, as dangerous and a threat to their interests, which was true to a certain extent as publicly the party called for the withdrawal of the base and were opposed to the Federation[89]. However, al Asnag was probably the most 'moderate' of all the leading Nationalists in the Colony, and was generally opposed to a policy of violent opposition to the British presence[90]. Despite this, there were few attempts by the British to involve the PSP in any of the talks on independence, at least until Labour came to power, but even then the High Commissioner was usually opposed to a Nationalist presence in talks on Aden's future[91]. Having said that, it is doubtful whether al Asnag would have accepted due to the fear of being labelled as an 'imperialist stooge', and he declined the offer of the vacant nominated seat in the Legislative Council in November 1964 as he was afraid members of the PSP would defect to the NLF[92].

The PSP's opposition to violence was not always clear from the statements that were made by some of its leaders, such as Idris Hanbala declaring in a Youth Cultural Club debate that "if peaceful methods failed to bring independence, civil disobedience or even armed force should be resorted to"[93]. There was, in fact, a wing of the PSP which favoured a more violent approach to their campaign, the most notable member of this camp being Khalifa Abdullah Hasan al-Khalifa, who threw the grenade at Trevaskis in December 1963 (see Chapter Five). However, with the exception of this attack at Khormaksar, the PSP rarely resorted to violence before the NLF started their campaign in Aden, despite ANM pamphlets stating that "that grenade has not been the first one to be thrown. There will be others"[94]. British Intelligence were also aware of al Asnag's

---

[89] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 30
[90] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 110
[91] For example: PRO DEFE 11/596/3899 - *Record of Teleprinter discussion between Secretary of State for the Colonies and Turnbull*, 21 March 1965 - Greenwood wanted al Asnag involved in a National Government after the resignation of Baharun, but Turnbull was opposed
[92] PRO DEFE 11/523/3737 - *Aden Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Nov. 1964
[93] 'Paper on Aden Trade Union Congress' - *Trevaskis Papers, Part I: MSS Brit. Emp. s367*
[94] *ibid.* - the paper believed the ANM were distributing the pamphlet on behalf of the PSP

non-violent approach and even his view that the base should not be evacuated given its value to the economic welfare of Aden[95]. Nevertheless, this stance did not mean that the PSP were going to make life easy for the British as the demonstrations and strikes continued during 1963 and 1964, although when al Asnag was absent, the party's activities diminished.

The main rival to the PSP as the leading Nationalist group was the NLF, which favoured an armed struggle to win independence, and relations between the two groups were never very strong. Partly this was due to the difference over the use of violence, but also because of a contest for Egyptian support, which had favoured al Asnag before the creation of the Front. The NLF were supported by Egypt after their establishment, but this favour did not necessarily extend to all the Front's members, in particular Qahtan al-Sha'bi who found it very difficult to be accepted as the leader of the Front by the older South Arabian dissidents. There was the report that Qahtan had been arrested by the Egyptians in March 1964 for retaining part of a consignment of arms and ammunition destined for the dissident tribes[96]. Moreover, British Intelligence was also aware of the refusal of Muhammad Aidrus and the Ahl Abu Bakr bin Farid to serve under Qahtan[97]. These factors probably contributed to the British underestimating the Front as they were unaware of the two-tier structure of the NLF, so that whilst Qahtan was under arrest, the cells in the protectorate were still able to continue the revolution. The continuation of the NLF campaign was pointed out by British Intelligence, but they could not fully comprehend how the Front was able to maintain the state of unrest when the question of leadership was unresolved[98]

The PSP continued to receive Egyptian support, but also criticism for their non-violent approach to the struggle for independence. According to Khodabux Khan (a member of the Aden Legislative Council) al Asnag told the Egyptian authorities that he refused to use violence on behalf of the NLF because he would not harm his own people, and that

---

[95] PRO DEFE 11/523/3737 - *op. cit.*
[96] PRO DEFE 11/424/2519 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 10 March 1964
[97] PRO DEFE 11/423/2476 - *Trevaskis to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 22 Feb. 1964
[98] PRO CO 1055/62/17 - *LIC Aden Monthly Intelligence Summary*, March 1964

the British base provided a livelihood for many workers in Aden[99]. At about the same time, Cairo's 'Voice of the Arabs' was criticising al Asnag for being too moderate, which may have been a threat to the PSP to toe the Egyptian line with the NLF, who at the time were the UAR's favourites[100]. Kostiner believes al Asnag was leading the PSP in a new version of 'positive neutralism' by maintaining a dialogue with the British, but constantly criticising them as well[101]. This stance failed, however, due to the reluctance of the British to negotiate with any Arab Nationalist, however moderate, but also because the PSP was too reliant on Egyptian favour and aid to survive. The rise of the NLF as the more successful Nationalist organisation was damaging to both the PSP and al Asnag in his attempt to be the first leader of an independent South Arabian state. However, all was not lost, in particular as Nasser was seeking to unite all the Nationalist groups under his control, which al Asnag saw as an opportunity to re-establish his Nationalist credentials.

The Formation of OLOS

The London conference of July and August 1964 was a major disappointment to al Asnag, who had hoped for a more important role to play[102]. However, he was once again left on the sidelines as the British concentrated their efforts to achieve a stable South Arabia through co-operation with the Federation. Moreover, the differences that had developed between Egypt and the PSP over al Asnag's refusal to unite with the NLF and opposition to violence were also weakening the PSP's cause[103]. According to British sources, both al Asnag and the SAL leader Jifri were opposed to Qahtan's leadership, which had been about the only agreement reached when the two met with the ex-Sultan of Lahej, the ex-Fadhli Sultan, Muhammad Aidrus and Muhammad Abu Bakr bin Farid in Cairo in September 1964[104]. This meeting was important, however, as it underlined the opposition to Qahtan al-Sha'bi among the other dissident leaders,

---

[99] PRO CO 1055/33/25 - *Acting High Commissioner to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 16 Aug. 1964
[100] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 111
[101] *ibid.*, p.111
[102] *ibid.*, p. 111 & Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 31
[103] PRO CO 1055/154/E90 - *Present Policy of the P.S.P.*, LIC Aden Paper, 3 Nov. 1964
[104] *ibid.*

even if they found it hard to unite on other causes and methods. Moreover, there was increasing opposition among many of the PSP to Egyptian dominance, in particular the decision forced on the party to boycott the 1964 elections, which the PSP would probably have won[105]. This was causing a split within the party between 'moderates' and 'extremists', the latter possibly being attracted to the NLF, which was undermining the strength of the PSP. There was a possibility for the British to exploit this split to their advantage, but scepticism about al Asnag's intentions and the true depth of the division between Cairo and the PSP ruled out any attempt to support the 'moderate' Nationalists:

> "We must question whether any Arab nationalist leader, let alone a small-time one like al Asnaj, could fly in the face of Nasser. One would incline to the view that he would have in the end to toe the Egyptian line to survive"[106].

This was certainly true, but a more accepting attitude by the British may well have seen al Asnag accommodated within a more broadly-based government, which would have had a better chance of surviving the NLF/FLOSY assault of 1966-67 than the Federation did.

The combination of the failed 1964 conference and the split with Egypt forced a re-think of PSP policy on its leader, and there were attempts to regain Nasser's favour. Al Asnag was helped in this by the unpopularity of Qahtan among the other Nationalist leaders, and the PSP leader set about uniting the other parties into another front, the Organisation for the Liberation of the South (OLOS). In July 1964 the PSP had organised a counter-conference to the London one, an "Alignment of Nationalist Forces" in Cairo, intending to bring other dissident leaders under al Asnag's control[107]. There were no immediate decisions taken, but a further two conferences in March and April 1965 were followed by talks between Basendwah (a member of the Legislative Council), Jifri of the SAL, Muhammad Aidrus, the ex-Fadhli Sultan, the ex-Audhali Naib Ja'bal and Nu'man (a YAR Minister and former Free Yemeni) which lead to the

---

[105] *ibid.*
[106] *ibid.*
[107] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 111-2

creation of OLOS[108]. However, Jifri refused to merge the SAL with OLOS, which was a blow as the SAL was the only organisation with the ability to gather support in the Protectorate, even though it was no longer as powerful as it had been in the 1950s. The SAL by this time was a Saudi-backed organisation, and Jifri's refusal to sever the links with the kingdom and sink its identity into OLOS meant that there was no real representation for the new organisation in the Protectorate[109]. Moreover, the refusal of the NLF to join diminished the threat to the Federation and Colony, although the threat was still considerable from the NLF alone.

A significant outcome of the creation of OLOS was al Asnag's shift towards a policy of violence, with the decision taken to "retaliate firmly" to British policy and to "execute traitors"[110]. Moreover, the PSP were no longer calling for the union of the two Yemens, dropping all reference to Aden being part of the Yemen, but instead calling for the implementation of the UN resolutions of 1963[111]. These two developments, the support of violence and no longer calling for a Yemeni union, were an attempt by al Asnag to get closer to the Egyptian position and regain his position as head of the Nationalists. His aims to unite the various Nationalist groups also met with Nasser's approval as pressure was brought to bear on the NLF by the Egyptian intelligence services to join with OLOS[112]. Whilst there was agreement over certain aims, such as the abolition of the base and unconditional independence, there was no actual merger. This was partly due to the rise of the 'secondary leadership' within the NLF which was opposed to being under the domination of Nasser. Moreover, there was also competition between the two organisations to gather support, in particular with the trade unions in Aden. Some of the unions had come under NLF control and agitated for industrial action which the ATUC would try to curb, although thereby endangering their Nationalist position[113]. The NLF unions also moved to overthrow the ATUC executive in November 1965, and cabled the Yemeni Prime Minister that Qadhi and al Asnag no

---

[108] *ibid.*, p. 112 & PRO CO 1055/63/45 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, May 1965
[109] PRO CO 1055/63/49 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, July 1965
[110] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 112-3
[111] *ibid.*, p. 113 & PRO CO 1055/62/16 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Feb. 1964
[112] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 114-5
[113] PRO CO 1055/63/49 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, July 1965

longer represented the Aden labour movement[114]. In fact, the NLF succeeded in voting out al Asnag as Secretary-General for the first time since the ATUC was established, although they failed to oust Qadhi as President[115].

The two groups, OLOS and NLF, by the end of 1965 were in reality far from merging given their rivalry for Egyptian patronage and the emergence of the 'secondary leadership' within the Front. OLOS was the weaker of the two at the time, although according to British Intelligence they were more in favour with Cairo[116]. However, the British were somewhat blinkered with the Nationalists as they believed that without the support of the UAR, a group would not survive. This was true to an extent, but the NLF would later prove this premise dangerously wrong. OLOS was limited to Aden and could not compete with the Front in the Protectorate whilst the SAL remained aloof. Attempts were made once more to unite all three groups with the announcement that the NLF had merged with OLOS to create the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY) in January 1966 (see Chapter Seven). However, this was later denied by the secondary leadership, and the NLF leaders that had signed the agreement were expelled, thereby cutting off their Egyptian aid. Unlike OLOS/FLOSY, though, the NLF were able to survive without receiving supplies from the UAR, as they would prove in the last two years of British rule when the main focus was on who would succeed the rapidly ailing Federation once the announcement of withdrawal was made.

Conclusion

The establishment of the NLF was a turning-point in the Nationalist campaign against British rule in South Arabia. The Front was composed of groups representing a wide variety of interests and concerns in both the Western and Eastern Protectorates, although the ANM was the dominant faction, and could claim support throughout South West Arabia. The NLF's tactics, moreover, were also new to both the British and the Federation, as the Front aimed at symbolic victories, in particular the embarrassment of

[114] PRO CO 1055/63/54 - *LIC (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary*, Nov. 1965
[115] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 133
[116] PRO DEFE 11/601/4831 - *Situation Report week ending 8 Nov. 1965*

British forces, rather than the more tangible success of capturing a Federal fort. Whilst there were internal weaknesses and divisions, the British and Federal forces were unable to exploit them, largely because the cell structure of the NLF meant that the capture of a Front member was unlikely to lead to more than the compromising of that particular cell. The final notable point about the NLF was its eventual independence from Nasser and Egypt which meant that the Front would not be suddenly deprived of support after the Six Day War in June 1967, a fate which befell the UAR-backed FLOSY. The combination of these factors meant that by the time the British Government finally admitted it had to cut its commitments, the NLF were in a strong position to be the dominant group in South Arabia after independence.

Chapter Seven: The End of Empire?, 1966-67

Introduction

British policy towards South Arabia was to change radically from February 1966 when the Defence White Paper was published by the Secretary of State, Denis Healey. From then on the aim was to withdraw from the base in an orderly fashion and pass control of South Arabia to the Federation, if possible since this was definitely a secondary priority. The last eighteen months of British rule, therefore, saw the Federation and the Nationalist groups vying with each other for the power to run an independent State. Meanwhile, the British Forces were trying to disengage themselves from an increasingly confusing and fluid situation and at the same time bolster a Federation which was politically unstable and losing the loyalty of its own forces.

The 1966 Defence White Paper

The Need for Cuts

Since their election victory Labour had continued the east of Suez policy and Harold Wilson and many of his Cabinet, like their Conservative predecessors, maintained their belief in a world role for Britain (see above, Chapter 5). Therefore, the contents of the White Paper (published on 22 February) came as a surprise to many in both London and South Arabia. The decision to withdraw from Aden and grant independence in January 1968, after nearly 130 years of occupation, marked another blow to Britain's east of Suez policy. It deserves be examined for the reasons behind the policy and the implications it had for an independent South Arabia.

According to the memoirs and diaries of Labour politicians, the reasons behind the defence cuts and decisions to withdraw in the White Paper were primarily economic rather than military and were largely driven by pressure from a Treasury anxious to limit British spending. This in turn created difficulties for the Ministry of Defence which had to juggle Treasury-imposed cuts with political commitments that the Foreign Office were reluctant to relinquish. This left the Ministry of Defence under pressure from two different directions:

> "The Treasury, which sometimes seemed to know the price of everything and the value of nothing, was always pressing me for further cuts in defence spending. However, no government should cut a military capability without cutting the political commitment which made that capability necessary. And this the Foreign Office was usually reluctant to do; it seemed to regard every commitment as an invaluable pearl without price. So I had to fight a war on two fronts."[1]

However, Britain's increasing economic and financial problems meant cuts had to be made and Healey was instructed to cut the previous Conservative government's planned spending by £400 million (at 1964 prices) over five years. Further cuts were implemented later as the economic difficulties continued (including the devaluation of sterling) and in the end defence spending was reduced from over 7% of the nation's output (GNP) to 5% with £5,000 million saved[2].

The initial saving was primarily achieved by scrapping the aircraft carrier programme (which caused the resignation of the First Sea Lord of the Admiralty, the brother of Sir William Luce, former Governor of Aden) and buying American F111 planes instead of building new British ones[3]. This was not enough, as Healey pointed out, since the Government could only save money by relinquishing commitments. British commitments were needing more and more time, money and effort to defend due to the increased military power of certain countries ("Wogs have Migs" as Julian Amery offensively put it during the Suez debate[4]). The problem, though, was that withdrawal

---

[1] Healey, Denis - *The Time of My Life* (Michael Joseph, London, 1989), p. 256
[2] *ibid.*, p. 270-1
[3] *ibid.*, p. 275-6
[4] *ibid.*, p. 279

from Aden was unlikely to save manpower due to continuing commitments in the Persian Gulf (Kuwait, the Trucial States). Furthermore, Britain could not reduce its manpower in the Far East due to involvement in the conflict in Borneo. Ultimately, however, the base in Aden had to be given up due to the worsening security situation there which meant more British troops were involved in the defence of the base than there were on standby for the defence of Gulf commitments (the main reason for the presence in South Arabia).

The Conservative Government in 1962 had promised that British troops would stay in Aden 'permanently'. This was then reversed and in 1964 it was announced that they would grant independence in 1968. The Labour administration had also announced that they would not relinquish the base, with Healey announcing as late as January 1966 (during his visit to Australia) that Britain "had no intention of ratting on her commitments in the Middle East"[5]. However, the harsh reality of the economic situation and the problems of maintaining the security of the base meant Aden and the Federation had to be abandoned:

> "Since the population was hostile to Britain, and deeply riven by internal divisions, these two promises [the Conservative ones of 1962 and 1964] were obviously incompatible. We found it impossible to make any constitution work, and had to impose direct rule in 1965. So we decided to stick to the date for independence but to remove our troops at the same time. All alternatives would have been worse."[6].

However, the White Paper was not well received in either London or South Arabia for differing reasons. The Conservatives in the House of Commons denounced the withdrawal as a betrayal of Britain's friends, especially as there was to be no military assistance to the Federation after independence, and the left-wing of the Labour Party called the cuts too little. Christopher Mayhew (Minister of State for the Navy) resigned the day of publication due to the cuts in the defence programme with no comparable cut in commitments[7]. Richard Crossman was also disappointed that the White Paper

---

[5] Balfour-Paul, Glen - *The end of empire in the Middle East* (CUP, Cambridge, 1991), p.85
[6] Healey - *op. cit.*, p.284
[7] Mayhew, Christopher - *Time to Explain* (Hutchinson, London, 1987), pp. 170-2

contained no immediate cut in commitments. Crossman noted in his diaries that during a Commons debate on the reduction of the East of Suez policy (15 June 1966), Callaghan whispered to him that he disagreed with Harold Wilson's line that "he would never deny Britain the role of a world power"[8]. Moreover, Callaghan believed that Healey and George Brown were also unenthusiastic,

> "East of Suez is solely the P.M.'s line - the P.M. with George Wigg's backing. Undoubtedly, it's all a fantastic illusion. How can anyone build up Britain now as a great power East of Suez when we can't even maintain the sterling area and some of our leaders are having the idea of creeping inside Europe in order to escape from our independence outside?"[9].

Crossman believed he only held up his own hand in the vote because he was a Minister and so was expected to support the Prime Minister[10]. This criticism of Wilson also comes across in Healey's account of the debate over withdrawing from East of Suez. Healey was initially in favour of maintaining the policy,

> "But hard experience compelled me to recognise that the growth of nationalism would have made it politically unwise for Britain to maintain a military presence in the Middle East and South East Asia, even if our economic situation had permitted it"[11].

He also maintained that the Government could not have withdrawn immediately due to troops still fighting in South Arabia and Borneo, and the need for the consent of Britain's partners. However, the other factor against an earlier withdrawal was that "Harold Wilson had illusions of grandeur about our post-imperial role in Asia and Africa; they endured even after his Cabinet had swung against it"[12]. The Prime Minister, however, believed that,

---

[8] Crosmman, Richard - *The Diaries of a Cabinet Minister: Volume One, Minister of Housing, 1964-66* (Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, London, 1976), p. 540
[9] *ibid.*, p. 540
[10] *ibid.*, p. 540
[11] Healey - *op. cit.*, p.299
[12] *ibid.*, p.300

> "a majority, including myself, moved more by thoughts of a contribution to international peace-keeping than by considerations of imperial splendour, favoured the retention of a minimum force there [i.e. East of Suez]"[13].

Timing of the Announcement

According to Government documents, the decision to withdraw was taken by mid-December 1965, at the latest since by 16 December, the Colonial Office had written a memo on the outcome of the Defence Review[14]. Moreover, the Defence and Overseas Policy Committee were discussing the issue of the timing of the announcement by 20 December[15]. This makes the decision to allow Lord Beswick (a junior Minister for the Colonies) to visit South Arabia in November 1965 and announce that Britain would stay in Aden to reassure the Federal Rulers either very shortsighted or very duplicitous. Had the decision already been taken to withdraw then it seems highly unlikely that a Government Minister would have been allowed to announce that Britain was staying. This would suggest, therefore, that either the Government had not made the final decision to withdraw, or if the decision had been taken, then a delay in announcing the withdrawal was required. In fact, Beswick had telegrammed London to state that the financial obligations needed to retain base were greater than previously thought[16]. The fact that these obligations would have had to be met in order to secure the co-operation of a future independent government (for road building, countering starvation in Fadhli) could well have forced the Government's decision. The Government as a whole, and the Treasury in particular, would have been very reluctant to sanction extra financial support at a time of economic difficulties and cut-backs.

Once the decision had been taken, however, then the main question concerned the timing of the announcement. The differences between the Whitehall departments again spring to the surface with the Colonial Office and Ministry of Defence in favour of an

---

[13] Wilson, Harold - *The Labour Government 1964-70: A Personal Record* (Weidenfeld and Nicolson, London, 1971), p. 276

[14] PRO CAB 148/49 *Outcome of the Defence Review: Aden Base*, Memo by Colonial Office, 16 Dec. 1965

[15] PRO CAB 148/49 *Consequences of announcement of out intention to withdraw from the Aden base*, Minutes of Sub-Committee Meeting, 20 Dec. 1965

[16] PRO DEFE 11/601/4841 *Lord Beswick to Secretary of State for the Colonies*, 11 Nov. 1965

early announcement, but the Foreign Office wanting to delay it as long as possible. The Colonial Office memo mentioned above argued that once the announcement was made then the various interests in South Arabia would sink their differences and work together[17]. If the announcement was delayed for long after the Defence Review was finished, it continued, then withdrawal would be seen in the Middle East as the result of UAR pressure. The memo acknowledges that foreign policy considerations militated against an early announcement since it would be preferable to complete negotiations with the Sultan of Masirah about having a base there. Furthermore, there was the danger that Nasser might have reversed the planned Egyptian withdrawal from the Yemen to claim he drove the British out of South Arabia. On the other hand, D.J. McCarthy at the Foreign Office stated that,

> "The decision [to withdraw completely] will come as a shock. Most Adenis, including Al Asnag, have counted on our defence interest keeping us on their side against their neighbours in the Federation" [18].

McCarthy pointed out that the NLF and Egyptians would not relax and would seek "to show that our departure is their victory" and so the later the news broke the better[19]. Moreover, the idea that an early announcement would enforce a free agreement between the Adenis and the Federalis was misconceived since the Government would have lost virtually the last sanction against either by announcing independence and withdrawal. He also warned that the decision made the break-up of the Federation "a real possibility", albeit not inevitable[20].

Ultimately, however, the decision went against the Foreign Office, although it would appear that the reason for this was not due to political considerations in South Arabia. The Foreign Office were proposing that reference to the withdrawal should be as vague as possible in the White Paper. Healey, though, felt the Paper must contain some indication of the intention not to retain the base:

---

[17] PRO CAB 148/49 - *Outcome of Defence Review: Aden Base*, 16 Dec. 1965
[18] PRO CAB 148/49 *Defence Review - Reactions to the provisional decision on Aden in the Federation of South Arabia*, Note by Foreign Office, 20 Dec. 1965
[19] *ibid.*
[20] *ibid.*

> "He [Healey] appears to feel that the proposed departure from Aden is one of the few concrete signs that can be given that the Defence Review really means something in terms of a reduction of commitments and that in any case even if the White Paper is fuzzy on the point it is going to be virtually impossible to refuse significant clarifications in the lengthy Parliamentary discussions which follow its publication"[21].

Therefore, the arguments in favour of delaying the announcement to let the Egyptians withdraw from the Yemen were ignored in favour of domestic politics. The implication of Healey's decision is that, had there been more substance to the White Paper, then the decision to withdraw could have been announced at a later, more favourable date for the British.

Once the Foreign Office had been defeated over the decision, the problem was how to present the withdrawal to the Federation and to ensure that a friendly successor state was in control when independence took place. The High Commissioner, Turnbull, believed that the timing of the announcement was not as important as the content[22]. He believed that an announcement without an offer of financial support and technical and administrative aid would mean that the Federation would start to disintegrate almost immediately. This would then lead to the need for an increased military effort for the period up to independence to ensure an orderly withdrawal. The Foreign Office still believed that the timing was creating the real difficulties, but recognised that continuing support for the Federation might ensure its survival. Moreover, support for the Federal rulers would also reassure the rulers in the Gulf that Britain would not abandon them,

> "The moral of this is that we should perhaps support the High Commissioner in his efforts to secure a continuing commitment at this stage, even though in our hearts we may doubt the wisdom, and indeed the eventual feasibility, of such a commitment to a ramshackle, disunited and probable unviable South Arabian state. Such a commitment might, in short, enable us to turn an awkward corner as regards the Gulf"[23].

---

[21] PRO FO 371/185180/B1071/3 *Minute by B.A.B. Burrows*, 7 Jan 1966
[22] *ibid.*
[23] PRO FO 371/185180/B1071/3 *Minute by Roger Allen*, 7 Jan 1966

In the end, though, the main goal of all departments was, "to avoid, or minimize Nasser's triumph and the extent to which he can exploit the announcement of our withdrawal"[24]. Therefore, the priority driving British policy once the decision to withdraw had been taken was not the establishment of a stable successor state in good relations with Britain, but rather firstly to deny victory to Nasser and also keep the Gulf Rulers happy.

Reaction to the White Paper

The reaction to the announcement in South Arabia was, as McCarthy had predicted, one of shock and dismay. The Federal Ministers viewed the decision, "a breach of faith by H.M.G.", and requested, "increased financial assistance and other help to make the local security forces able to defend South Arabia after Independence" [25]. Adeni opinion was more divided; on the one hand there was, "publicly manifested satisfaction at the planned early departure of the British", but on the other some were afraid that there might be, "a clash between not only Adenis and other Federal subjects, but amongst Adenis themselves"[26].

The Federal Supreme Council were in fact informed of the decision by Lord Beswick, just three months after his last visit to reassure them. They were bitter, not so much because of the base closure, but because of the refusal to defend them after independence. The Federal Ministers contrasted this refusal with the continued support for Kuwait, and regarded it as a clear breach of the 1959 Treaty and 1964 White Paper[27]. Unsurprisingly, the independence and withdrawal announcement pushed the Hone/Bell proposals into the background, and the prospect of constitutional advance rapidly receded once the Federal Rulers realised they were no longer to receive British support. This was alarming since the 'feudal'/tribal form of government in the Federation was one of the main sources of propaganda for the Nationalist groups, and the lack of constitutional advance would strengthen their hand. This in turn could have

---

[24] *ibid.*
[25] PRO DEFE 11/503/5038 *Intelligence Report for February 1966*
[26] *ibid.*
[27] PRO DEFE 11/502/4972 *Lord Beswick to Secretary of State for Colonies*, 17 Feb. 1966

disrupted a satisfactory (from a British point of view) withdrawal which in turn threatened the proposed redeployment to the Gulf, especially as a Nationalist victory meant potential instability in the region. Moreover, D.J. McCarthy at the Foreign Office warned that the Federal Government may give up if there was no improvement in terms, Aden dismissed Hone/Bell, and the few Adenis brought into the Federal fold represented few people. Therefore he proposed offering support to the Federation (although the Government could have hedged the commitment in order to promote constitutional reform) the cost of which should have been seen in the terms of the alternatives and the possible disruption of the peninsula set-up and oil supply[28]. This, eventually, did happen to a certain extent, but by the time the Government had reconsidered, it was a case of too little, too late as far as the Federation was concerned.

The 1966 White Paper, therefore, marked the countdown to the end of British rule in Aden. The decision to implement defence cuts and withdraw from South Arabia was largely due to financial expediency and the need to relinquish overseas commitments. These cuts disappointed Wilson's desire for an international role for Britain, although they did not go far enough for many in the Labour Party who wanted further commitments cut. The White Paper's effect on South Arabia was in some ways to increase the difficulties of the British administration there since it gave a boost to the Nationalists, although it could be argued that it was fairly likely that the UAR would not have withdrawn from the Yemen anyway. However, the decisions to withdraw and, importantly, refusal to make a defence commitment, did undermine the Federal Government who had now lost their source of military and financial support, which in turn created instability and uncertainty as to the future of South Arabia. Healey believed that it was the inherent weaknesses of the Federation and the policies of the previous administration which caused its downfall rather than the White Paper and lack of British support, "South Arabia is a mess; but it was already an irredeemable mess when the Wilson Government took over"[29]. This could be viewed as passing the buck,

---

[28] PRO FO 371/185179/B1052/81 *Letter McCarthy to Allen*, 3 Mar 1966 - in this letter, McCarthy indulges in an 'I told you so' over his predictions for an early announcement, "Everyone in the know here, in December, regarded the optimistic thesis as dangerously unsound" and "the Egyptian reaction was exactly what the Department predicted"

[29] Healey - *op. cit.*, p.300

but it has to be admitted that the Federation was already weak and only survived with British aid, which was clearly seen when that aid was withdrawn in the final months before independence.

The Crater Mutiny and the Collapse of the Federation

Attempts to Strengthen the Federation

The 1966 White Paper announced independence and British withdrawal with the intention of passing the reins of power to the Federation of South Arabia. However, as noted above, there were warnings from British Government officials that the announcement could well politically destabilise the Federation and demoralise the Federal security forces. In contrast, the announcement was expected to encourage the Nationalists who, with Egypt's support, would themselves seek to take credit for driving the British out and take power once the colonial authorities had gone. The final eighteen months of British rule were, therefore, characterised by requests from the Federal Rulers for support after independence and increased Nationalist attacks against the Federation and the British. The demise of the Federation was not inevitable, but it did become increasingly likely, and the attitude and loyalty of the Federal Forces became more and more important since they were vital to the Rulers' survival as head of an independent South Arabia. The final nail in the coffin, therefore, came when the South Arabian Army and Armed Police mutinied, which confirmed what many had suspected - that the Federation could not take control of an independent State and that the British would have to deal with one or more of the Nationalist groups.

There were attempts by both the Federation and the British to broaden the basis of the Federal government and attract support from the more 'moderate' Nationalists in order to resist the Egyptian-backed, 'extremist' groups. These included FLOSY, the successor to OLOS (see below) and the NLF, who were actually trying to distance

themselves from Cairo's control during this period. The Federal reasoning for this was obvious self-interest despite their earlier distaste for any form of constitutional advance and rapprochement with any nationalist, whilst the British were keen to pass control to a friendly government in order to prevent destabilising the region and threatening Western interests in the Gulf (primarily oil supplies). Therefore from March 1966 onwards certain Federal Rulers had informal discussions with those dissident leaders who had been creating tribal unrest in the mid-1950s and Federal defectors[30]. On 18 March, the Audhali and Fadhli Sultans and Naib Nasir al Audhali met Ahmad bin Abdullah al Fadhli and Jabil bin Husain al Audhali (the former Sultan and Naib of that state, both members of FLOSY by this time) at Qarsh (near the Yemeni border), both sides stating they had much in common with the SAL[31]. Then on 25 March, the SAL leadership (with the support of some Protectorate rebels) met the Federal and FLOSY representatives in Asmara, in Eritrea, having already met with al Asnag and Maqawi (also of FLOSY) in Cairo[32]. However, the presence of Ahmad al Fadhli and Jabil bin Husain at Asmara and Qarsh was on their own initiative and not endorsed by the FLOSY leadership, and so should not have been taken as a sign of any softening of the FLOSY approach towards the Federation[33]. Furthermore, the meeting between the SAL and al Asnag and Maqawi in Cairo was probably more to persuade the League to join FLOSY rather than an attempt to reach agreement on joining with the Federation. This was underlined by the refusal of al Asnag and Maqawi to attend the meeting between the Federal representatives and the SAL leaders in Beirut in late March/early April 1966[34]. Al Asnag and Maqawi were supposed to have been at the meeting, but didn't go, probably because of Egyptian pressure[35].

At this stage, whilst the British were still expecting the Federal Supreme Council to disintegrate if there was no aid promised, the talks between the Federation and the SAL and certain elements of FLOSY gave some hope for the future. However, this did not

---

[30] For example, see PRO DEFE 11/503/5044 - *L.I.C. (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summery for March, 1966*, which talks of these meetings as "one ray of light in the present dark situation"
[31] PRO DEFE 11/503/5044 - *L.I.C. (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary for March, 1966*
[32] *ibid.*
[33] Kostiner, Joseph - *The Struggle for South Yemen* (Croom Helm, London, 1984), p. 131
[34] PRO DEFE 11/503/5044 - *op. cit.*
[35] *ibid.*

last long. By the end of 1966 the Federal (and British) position in South Arabia was clearly on the verge of collapsing unless radical measures were introduced. This was underlined by the visit of the Chairman (C.F.R. Barclay) and Deputy Chairman (N.St.G. Gribbon) of the South Arabian Action Group (SAAG), a committee made up of members of the Colonial Office, Foreign Office and Ministry of Defence which was established to oversee the withdrawal of British forces. The report of this visit is important as it presented the reality of the situation facing Britain and the Federation. Whilst there had been previous warnings from Government officials working in South Arabia that the British position was in danger of being undermined unless action was taken, the SAAG report highlighted that the situation was almost irredeemable. The report pointed out that,

> "It seems very possible that unless the present prospects alter significantly, the Egyptians will succeed in establishing their authority over the Western end of South Arabia, including Aden, during 1968"[36].

The Chairman and his Deputy set out the main factors affecting "the South Arabian situation" and put forward recommendations to preserve British interests. The dominating factor, according to them, was the Egyptian presence in the Yemen which, combined with "Egyptian organised intimidation", was "inhibiting all normal political development"[37]. The security situation was in a bad state with the British forces having the problem of "running down the base on the one hand, whilst maintaining the operational units at peak efficiency ready to meet the uncertain military situation ahead on the other"[38]. Moreover, since security measures, especially in Aden, were in the hands of British forces, once they withdrew, the survival of the Federation would rely on the loyalty and efficiency of the Federal Army. Another major weakness was that,

> "an overall lack of confidence in the future of the Federation is leading to an unwillingness on the part of many Federal authorities to commit themselves wholeheartedly to building up their country on present lines. This is tending to affect the security situation adversely"[39].

---

[36] PRO DEFE 11/506 - *South Arabia Action Group: Report by Chairman and Deputy Chairman on their visit to South Arabia from 31 October to 12 November 1966*, 14 Dec. 1966
[37] *ibid.*
[38] *ibid.*
[39] *ibid.*

Furthermore, there was a severe lack of intelligence information which was hampering the ability of the security forces to counter the threat to the Federation and arrange an orderly withdrawal. To fulfill British aims, the SAAG recommended that the Government did everything possible to: undermine the Egyptian position in the Yemen; establish a full time Intelligence Staff; give the Federation all possible administrative help to strengthen its forces; use retaliatory action over the Yemeni border; and strengthen the power of South Arabian broadcasting to counter propaganda. The report concluded that "the chief importance of achieving a secure and stable situation in South Arabia was the effect that this, or rather the lack of this, would have on the Persian Gulf"[40]. However, the report also warned that,

> "the security prospects for South Arabia, both before and after Independence, are bad. It is too late now to introduce measures that might have been effective a year or two ago. Without the Egyptian presence in the Yemen the new Federation might be able to work out its own salvation and become viable and stable by local standards. If, however, the Egyptian threat remains, it seems likely to us that the security situation will deteriorate seriously between now and Independence. We further doubt whether the Federation will survive for long after Independence unless it receives effective support either from the United Nations or from a friendly power."[41].

This bleak warning was repeated in other documents from the time with the common factors being the threat of Egyptian influence via the YAR and the necessity of loyalty among the Federal Forces[42].

Federal Forces

The question of the morale and reliability of the Federal Regular Army and Federal Guard was important since the Federation could not survive without armed forces to support it against the different Nationalist groups. However, it became clear that the different forces which were supposed to be under the control of the Federal Rulers were in fact increasingly disillusioned with their masters. Furthermore, there was also

---

[40] *ibid.*
[41] *ibid.*
[42] for example see PRO DEFE 11/525 - *Situation Report on South Arabia, January-23 February 1967*, DEFE 11/525 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia,*

increasing evidence that the security forces had been infiltrated by one or more of the Nationalist groups:

> "The morale of the Aden Police is low and their reliability, particularly in the event of serious disturbances of political origin, is questionable. Their value against terrorism is negligible"[43].

The Aden Police did seem to be the worst affected by low morale and infiltration, and the arrest of Chief Inspector Husain Jawi for complicity in terrorism was an indication of the severity of the situation[44]. However, it was not the only force involved since the FRA, the FG and Aden Armed Police had all also been compromised by Nationalist infiltration[45]. This was later shown by the Crater Mutiny and the refusal/inability of the Federal forces to combat the NLF or FLOSY seizing control of different Federal states following the collapse of the ruler's control in the hinterland and the British withdrawal (see below). This was a major worry for British plans for an orderly evacuation since, "Federal forces must begin to take over the full burden [of maintaining security], whereas hitherto they have had British air, logistic and other backing"[46]. In order to bolster the Federation and enable an orderly withdrawal, therefore, the British tried to gain international recognition for an independent South Arabia through the United Nations. However, the visit of a UN Mission to Aden was a disaster (April 1967) from that point of view as none of the Nationalist parties agreed to meet the Mission unless it was recognised as the sole representative of the South Arabian peoples (see below).

Doubts about the Federal Forces continued, especially as the dates for handing over power drew near[47]. The Federal Government, in fact, wanted the surrender of British sovereignty to be brought forward, although they were in no hurry for independence. The rulers wanted the freedom to deal with their opponents as they saw fit without having to worry about international condemnation (as the British did), but at the same

---

[43] PRO FO 371/185311 - *Note on the Morale and reliability of the Aden Police*, 1966
[44] *ibid.*
[45] Kostiner - *op. cit.*, p. 101
[46] PRO DEFE 11/525 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia*,
[47] see PRO DEFE 11/525/5631 - *South Arabia: Brief for the Secretary of State for Defence*, 10 Mar 1967

time were unwilling to be left without British military support if things went wrong. They argued that

> "terrorism in Aden must be dealt with effectively before independence if the future state is to survive; that our [i.e. British] methods cannot deal with it; that their methods could, but not if they have to be applied in conditions of British sovereignty and British Parliamentary supervision"[48].

Britain was unwilling to do this since, once sovereignty was surrendered, then they could not reassert it. Therefore, if the Federation were defeated by the Nationalists, then the port, Khormaksar airfield and water supplies (all of which were vital supply lines for the base) would be under the control of a group/groups opposed to the British. The Federation also continued to try to broaden their political base and by the end of February 1967 had completed a draft constitution which provided for a President, a Prime Minister and Deputy and a single chamber Parliament[49]. However, the Sharif of Beihan, the most respected and most popular of the Federal rulers - at least among the other rulers and Ministers - refused the Presidency[50]. This resulted in disputes over who would take which position in the government and threatened to split the Supreme Council.

The Crater Mutiny

Ultimately the lack of confidence in the Federation, its inability to stand on its own two feet without British support and the low morale of its forces were its downfall. Events reached a predictable conclusion when the South Arabian forces mutinied and the British and Federal Governments lost control of Crater for two weeks after 20 June 1967. The spark that set off the events of 20 June lay in tribal rivalry and the structure of the Federal forces, in particular the predominance of officers and troops from Aulaqi tribes. In the FRA, 37% of officers and 23% of men, including the Commander-designate, the Deputy Commander-designate and seven of the ten commanding officers

---

[48] PRO DEFE 11/525 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia,*
[49] PRO DEFE 11/526 - *Situation Report on South Arabia, 24 February-17 March, 1967*
[50] PRO DEFE 11/525/5621 - *Situation Report for Week Ending 6 Mar 1967*

were all Aulaqi[51]. This had caused resentment among officers and men from other tribes, which was greatly exacerbated by the appointment as Commander-Designate of 'Aqeed' (Colonel) Nasser Buraik Aulaqi in May 1967. The appointment had been opposed by both the High Commissioner and the Commander in Chief of British Middle East Land Forces. The latter commented that Buraik was,

> "a manipulator with strong Aulaqi bias. As soon as his appointment is confirmed it is probable that he will try to manipulate his Army posts to his advantage. He already has many enemies and the number will increase"[52].

However, as the High Commissioner suggested, the Federal Supreme Council failed to appreciate the widespread opposition to Buraik[53]. They wanted their own man on whose loyalty they could rely and the appointment was confirmed. The depth of feelings against him was shown by the petition signed by 11 senior Arab officers - 4 of the 6 'Aqeeds' and 7 of the 15 'Quaids' (Lieutenant-Colonels) - and presented to the Federal Ministry of Defence on 3 June. However, the matter was put on hold until the British Commander of the South Arabian Army (SAA), Brigadier Dye, returned from leave on 16 June.

Another factor which played a part in the Mutiny was the demoralising effect of the Arab defeat in the Six Day War (5-10 June): "the effect of rumours on groups of tribesmen in uniform already subject to overstrain and always tending to be emotional"[54]. This view, despite its patronising overtones of the colonial attitude towards indigenous troops, showed how wide an impact the Israeli victory over Egypt, Syria and Jordan had on the rest of the Middle East. The Six Day war was demoralising for Arab Nationalists in general, although the NLF did benefit from Nasser's defeat as Egypt could no longer afford - militarily, financially, or politically - to support FLOSY in their South Arabian campaign (see below).

---

[51] PRO DEFE 11/533/E6456 - *Report on the Mutinies within the South Arabian Forces on 20 June 1967*, HQMEC, 26 Oct. 1967
[52] PRO DEFE 11/527/5796 - *MELF to MoD Army*, 6 May 1967
[53] PRO DEFE 11/527/5789 - *Telegram from High Commissioner to Foreign Office*, 4 May 1967
[54] PRO DEFE 11/533/E6456 - *op. cit.*

The other notable event behind the Crater Mutiny was the actual reorganisation of the Federal security forces in June 1967. Ironically, the aim of this reorganisation had been to help the Federation prepare for independence and enable it to defend itself from outside attack without British support. The reverse, in fact, happened, as the restructuring of the FRA, FG and Police forces saw a further dip in morale and a corresponding dip in efficacy. The creation of a unified Federal Police force had made little progress as State Rulers were reluctant to lose control of their forces. The morale of the South Arabian Police (SAP) was poor, whilst the Aden Police were intimidated by the "terrorist organisations"[55]. Some Police officers and men gave active support to these organisations, and since few criminals were tried, the Police had little incentive to make arrests. The FG2 was ill-disciplined, poorly trained, poorly administered and badly equipped - for example 40% of the soldiers of FG2 in April 1967 were without uniforms[56]. As regards the SAA, morale had deteriorated as "Arabisation" of the force had produced lower standards of efficiency, junior officers were unhappy with their senior (and sometimes less competent) officers. Finally, expansion of the Federal Guard had not 'detribalised' FG 1 to the same extent as the FRA had been, and the operational efficiency of these units was below that of the old FRA. The report on the Mutiny summarised the effects of the reorganisation on the new forces, with particular emphasis on the different Police forces who would prove to be the most difficult of the mutineers to appease:

> "On 1st June, 1967, the SAA and SAP came into being. The SAA was formed by an amalgamation of the Federal Regular Army (FRA) consisting of five battalions, with the bulk (four battalions) of the Federal Guard 1 (FG 1). This amalgamation became a fact. In contrast the SAP's amalgamation was - and still is - in name only; it is still the eventual intention to amalgamate the Federal Guard 2 (FG2), the Aden Armed and Civil Police, the Lahej State Police, and the remnant of FG 1 to form this force. On June 20th and still today these four Police organisation operated as separate entities and little cross-posting has taken place."[57].

---

[55] *ibid.*
[56] *ibid.*
[57] *ibid.*

Thus, with low morale, strong tribal influences, ill-discipline in certain units, little progress in creating a unified Police force and lower efficiency, the Federal security forces were already in a state of tension. The appointment of Buraik, therefore, can be seen as the straw that finally broke the camel's back.

When Brigadier Dye returned, he recommended suspension of the four 'Aqeeds' who had signed the petition, which the Supreme Council duly endorsed (17 June)[58]. The 'Aqeeds' were incensed and planned to demonstrate the depth of feeling against the Aulaqis in the SAA, and at least one British official received information that demonstrations were planned for Monday 19 June. In the event, that day passed off quietly, but reports about the state of unrest among the SAA were received and seemingly discounted. Although reports of unrest were no indication of the violence that occurred on 20 June, the British should have been more aware of the low morale and high tensions running through the SAA and SAP. The report into the Mutiny pointed out that, "it is not intended to suggest that these reports indicated that there was any possibility of violence. They did, however, indicate unrest and dissatisfaction."[59]. This "unrest and dissatisfaction" was, however, largely ignored. Therefore, although the Commander SAA doubled the guard on the armouries, the assurance that everything was quiet during the 19th, meant that the events of the 20th came as a surprise:

> "when the mutinies began on the morning of 20th June 1967, the British forces were unaware of the state of tension that had been reached within the South Arabian Army and which was to percolate down to the South Arabian Police and Aden Armed Police"[60].

Given the repeated warnings from the SAAG and, before that, the Western Aden Protectorate Security Committee in 1962 and 1965 about the poor state of the Federal forces, this ignorance is surprising. Furthermore, this lack of awareness about the tensions within the security forces was to prove very costly.

---

[58] *ibid.*
[59] *ibid.*
[60] *ibid.*

The first incident was at the main SAA training camp at Lake Lines where a demonstration by youths from the Apprentices School led to a crowd forming which tried to get into the armoury, but was foiled by Arab officers and NCOs[61]. At about the same time (10 a.m.), the Federal Minister of Defence ordered Dye to reinstate the four 'Aqeeds', presumably in order to lower tensions within the SAA. At Champion Lines barracks, however, an order, from the Federal Ministry of Internal Security, was given to form two riot squads to help deal with the troubles at Lake Lines[62]. Significantly, though, senior British and Arab officers, who might have disputed the action, did not see the order. As a result the squads refused to go on parade having heard and believed a rumour that the British had fired on the SAA in Lake Lines. A crowd of Arab troops then barricaded themselves inside the Northern end of the camp and firing began (at about 10:15 a.m.) which became intense, and British personnel were blockaded inside the guardroom. There was also fire directed at Radfan camp and at RAF Khormaksar as rumours spread about the British firing on Arab troops. However, the return of a senior Arab officer to Champion Lines and actions by British troops restored order and stability to the barracks by the early afternoon (1:30 p.m.)[63]. Even so, the mutiny highlighted the speed at which such an incident could happen under the conditions in South Arabia, and also that the Arab officers were unable to control their men as the situation got out of hand. Moreover, the news that the British had opened fire in Champion lines also reached Crater where it was to have far-reaching and drastic effects.

Rumours of the disturbances reached Crater at about 1100 hours, and they spread rapidly, including one that an attack on the Armed Police Barracks was imminent. This caused a state of near-panic and arms were forcibly taken (some 400 rifles and 35 semi-automatic machine guns). Unfortunately, two land rovers of British troops were in Crater, and were fired upon by the Armed Police, and eight of the nine men were killed. In fact the presence of the two land rovers was down to poor communications on the British side. A platoon near the Barracks had lost radio contact and the Company

[61] *ibid.*
[62] *ibid.*
[63] *ibid.*

Commander had feared for their safety when firing was heard. They went into Crater to investigate whilst the platoon had withdrawn from the area by another route and radio contact had been lost due to being screened by a range of hills. The platoon was then ordered back into Crater to investigate what had happened to the land rovers, and also came under fire, with four men presumed killed (their bodies were never seen). The only survivor from the land rovers was actually rescued by the Armed Police and evacuated from Crater in the evening of the 20th. After this, no British troop was to enter Crater for thirteen days until the Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders re-entered the town on 3 July.

The conclusions of the report into the mutinies again underlined the realities of the Federal and British positions in South Arabia, and showed the mistakes made by both in the previous months. Whilst the report was not finished until late October 1967, the criticisms it made about the state of the Federal forces were not new. The mutinies,

> "proved that the Federal Government had little or no control over the situation and did not command the respect or loyalty of it own Forces. .... It was plain that the Federal Government could only survive with British presence and backing and that some other form of administration must take over responsibility, and the sooner the better."[64]

The British Government had been made aware of the political and military weakness of the Federation by successive Governors and High Commissioner, as well as reports into the situation. For whatever reasons, largely a fear of international condemnation and the harming of British interests elsewhere, little had been done to bolster the Federation and harm its enemies. The covert operations in favour of the Royalists in the Yemen were the sole actions taken by the British against the Nationalists (see Chapter Six). However, these operations achieved little in terms of making the Federation a more substantial institution, especially as they could not be used for propaganda purposes due to the very nature of the actions.

---

[64] *ibid.*

The major weakness of the fight against the Nationalists, though, was the almost complete lack of useful Intelligence information the Federation had and the British received. The Federal Government had claimed to have access to Intelligence which they would not release to the British, but this was shown to have little foundation:

> "The paucity of British Intelligence information had long been realised by the authorities, but it had been thought in some quarters that the Federal Rulers knew a great deal. They did not."[65].

If the British believed that the Federal rulers had such information, however, why was there no attempt to share the intelligence? The weakness of valid British Intelligence had again been a repeated criticism of Johnston, Trevaskis and the Western Aden Protectorate Security Committee. This was also never properly remedied, but if the reason for that was the reliance on *possible* Federal Intelligence, then it is not surprising that the British authorities were unaware of the tensions running through the Federal forces.

Admittedly, the British authorities had no prior warning of the mutinies. The Federal Government had failed to pass on the warnings they had received. It is possible that had British Intelligence received any warnings then action could have been taken which might well have prevented some of the loss of life and tragedy in Crater. However, that is not really any excuse, since the British should have ensured that they had their own adequate Intelligence to listen to:

> "The need for Intelligence has been stressed over and again. To be satisfactory, Intelligence must be organised before an emergency and sources protected both before and during it. This is a lesson that British authorities have repeatedly failed to learn, with expensive consequences."[66].

If, however, the tensions within the SAA were known, then it was a serious miscalculation by Brigadier Dye in disciplining the officers who opposed the promotion of Buraik.

---

[65] *ibid.*
[66] *ibid.*

The report concluded by pointing out that the evidence suggested there was no pre-planned intention of armed mutiny. However, the blame lay with the Federal Forces as a whole. Furthermore, the risk of repetition remained whilst tribal suspicion and distrust exist. Finally, the presence of British troops and their bravery probably prevented a complete disintegration of the local forces.

The Federation survived the Crater Mutiny, but was fatally damaged by it as it was clear to all that the SAA and SAP had no confidence in the Supreme Council, their morale was low and efficiency poor. Even without the Crater Mutiny it was highly unlikely that the Federation would have survived beyond independence as by June 1967 it was clearly beginning to fall apart. In short, the Federal Rulers could only have survived with British financial and military help, but even this was unlikely to be enough without the actual presence of British troops. Therefore, the mutinies of 20 June finally proved to Her Majesty's Government that they would have to look elsewhere for a successor to their rule in South Arabia, and this meant having to deal with the Nationalists.

FLOSY vs. NLF: The Final Battle

Establishment of FLOSY

As the Federation was becoming increasingly vulnerable after the publication of the 1966 White Paper, the different Nationalist groups were conducting their own campaigns to try to succeed to power after the British withdrawal and Independence. After the events of 20 June, when it was clear to everybody that the Federation (at least in its present form) could not survive, attempts were made to bring the SAL, FLOSY and the NLF into the equation. However, with neither group willing to work with the other, and Nasser still having a large degree of influence over certain figures, this process was never going to be easy. Ultimately, the struggle to control an independent South Arabia boiled down to a military confrontation between FLOSY and the NLF.

This was occurring at the same time as the British were disengaging themselves and trying to maintain an orderly withdrawal.

The creation of Organisation for the Liberation of the Occupied South (OLOS) in May 1965 failed in its primary aim of giving Nasser overall control of the Nationalist campaign in South Arabia. Only a few of the NLF's leaders joined whilst the majority of the rank and file, the secondary leadership, continued their own campaigns independently of the UAR (see Chapter 6). The attempt to merge all the Nationalist groups under Egyptian control was repeated in January 1966 when the remnants of the PSP and most of the NLF leadership set up the Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY). Once again this was not successful in amalgamating the Nationalist groups since most of the NLF cells remained aloof. FLOSY did survive as an organisation until independence, and was a major force in South Arabia, largely due to its Egyptian patronage. However, it was never able to convince the majority of NLF followers to join its campaign. Moreover, since neither group would cede sole representation of the people of South Arabia to the other, one of them had to give way, which made armed conflict almost inevitable.

The introduction of FLOSY onto the South Arabian scene caused political uncertainty with prolonged discussions between al Asnag, Maqawi and al Sallami (a former NLF leader). This resulted only in a statement from Cairo Radio on 25 February that an announcement would soon be made "defining the type of popular revolutionary action to be adopted"[67]. There were rumours that a 'government-in-exile' would be formed, although in the end a "Revolutionary Council" (not a government-in-exile) was established with Maqawi as President, al Asnag a leading member, and six old NLF men (led by al Sallami) among the twelve of the twenty members named[68]. One possible reason for the lack of authoritative statements concerning FLOSY may well have been a need for a re-think in tactics and strategy following the publication of the Defence White Paper. What was evident, however, was that the Egyptians were putting their full weight behind FLOSY rather than the NLF whose supply of arms was stopped

[67] PRO DEFE 11/503/5038 - *Aden: Intelligence Report for February 1966*, 22 Mar. 1966
[68] *ibid.*

and in Taiz measures were taken to neutralise those unwilling to join FLOSY. The result was that the "militant" NLF members were "leaderless and confused" and the number of "terrorist incidents" in Aden dropped to seven[69]. Six of these were indiscriminate grenade attacks, but one was notable as Ali Husain Qadhi, President of the ATUC, was assassinated. Qadhi was a moderate and his removal would ease NLF efforts to take control of the labour movement[70].

Despite this lull in activity, British Intelligence (such as it was following the NLF's campaign against Arab Special Branch, see Chapter Six) rightly pointed out that in the future there would be a resurgence of attacks. The Sha'bi faction of the NLF were re-grouping and FLOSY's attempts to set up a political party would probably face difficulty in gaining support outside Aden and so may have to resort to "further terrorism"[71]. This was borne out by the number of incidents in Aden increasing again in March to 34, some by FLOSY, but others by Qahtan al Sha'bi's NLF, and some of the Assassinations were believed to have been organised directly by Egyptian Intelligence in Taiz[72].

In international terms, FLOSY was effective since,

> "It is accepted by the Afro-Asians who run the United Nations Committee of 24 as the authentic, and only, organ representative of South Arabia; it is similarly accepted by left-wing groups in other countries not excluding the United Kingdom, and it has been given some acceptance, under Egyptian pressure, by most Arab governments"[73].

However, in other respects it was also a failure since it was never able to dominate the political scene in South Arabia in the way the Egyptians had hoped. The South Arabian League refused to break its ties with Saudi Arabia, the other Protectorate dissident

---

[69] *ibid.*
[70] *ibid.*
[71] *ibid.*
[72] PRO DEFE 11/503/5044 - *L.I.C. (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary for March, 1966* - although this report also points out the lack of cohesive effort continued in the Federation where there were only three major attacks, which were directed by the Egyptians, and the leaders were from the old NLF
[73] PRO FO/371/185240/BA10112/58 - *The Front for the Liberation of Occupied South Yemen (FLOSY)*, FO Brief, 19 Oct. 1966

leaders (like Mohammed Aidrus) remained apart, and then the former Sultan and Naib of Fadhli were expelled for attending the talks with the Federal leaders in Beirut (July 1966, see above). Even in "terrorist terms" there was only limited success as, "Some hard core terrorists and extremists of the old NLF refused to accept the new direction and continued to operate independently of FLOSY"[74]. This led to a less coherent campaign against the British (especially in comparison to 1965) which reflected the political divisions among the Nationalists (which had also thrown the trades unions into confusion):

> "As both a political and terrorist organisation FLOSY is now unconvincing and in disarray. Politically, Asnag and Makkawi, and probably Mohammed Salem Basendwah, are at odds with one another. Some of the old NLF, such as Saif Dhalai and Sallami have stuck with Makkawi, while others have stayed with the hard core ANM/NLF ... The terrorist element has remained inhibited by Egyptian mistrust, again by the divisions of the political leadership, and by the growing disenchantment of the population up-country"[75].

However, the Foreign Office did still warn that despite this disarray, FLOSY were still potentially the most dangerous opposition organisation for the British in South Arabia. They were recognised by the UN, and they had Egyptian backing - although, this was also increasingly a hindrance given the growing opposition to Egyptian rule among Yemenis.

NLF Activities

The NLF on the other hand, during this period, were noted for their independence from Egypt. This could have been a damaging blow to the Front as Egypt was the main source for money and arms for any Nationalists to continue their campaign against the British. In fact, largely due to British Intelligence successes, the NLF had suffered a series of setbacks towards the end of 1965 (see Chapter Six). The Front's campaign actually ceased for a period when FLOSY was formed in January 1966 and the NLF seemed to split at this time:

---

[74] *ibid.*
[75] *ibid.*

> "The N.L.F. like F.L.O.S.Y. has never been free from internal rivalries and dissension and the resultant weakness in the N.L.F. leadership was possibly a reason why one N.L.F. faction under 'Ali Ahmad Nasir al Sallami accepted union with O.L.O.S. and later F.L.O.S.Y., leaving the tougher N.L.F. element to continue independent terrorism. ... and the tussle between the A.N.M.- backed independent N.L.F. and the Egyptian-backed F.L.O.S.Y. militants has resulted in much dissipation of effort and limitation of terrorist potential."[76].

What was notable, however, was that the most efficient FLOSY activists were in fact old NLF men who joined the merger because of loyalties to certain FLOSY leaders. There was, despite the setbacks of 1966, a resurgence in NLF activity towards the end of that year. This was largely at the expense of FLOSY which was itself suffering as al Asnag and Maqawi tried to stifle opposition to themselves and unite the various factions under their leadership(summer 1966)[77]. British Intelligence was aware of the fortunes of the two groups, albeit often after the fact and this knowledge rarely owed much to Intelligence actions. Nevertheless, it is still important to note that the British realised that:

> "From late 1966 it was obvious that the NLF was gaining ground. Having lost Egyptian backing in 1965/66 it benefited from appearing genuinely South Arabian by comparison with FLOSY"[78].

Shortly after this (early 1967), the first NLF propaganda for some time appeared, denouncing "dubious and malicious elements" (presumably FLOSY)[79]. However, by the end of 1966 British Intelligence was receiving reports that Maqawi had effected a détente with the NLF, the Egyptians were renewing their overtures to them, and that Qahtan was back in favour. The only evidence supporting this, though, was that Saif Ahmad Salih al Dhala'i (from the old NLF) had taken al Asnag's place in FLOSY's delegation to the UN.

Throughout 1966, the NLF was troubled by internal disputes, as British Intelligence discovered. However, due to the basis of the organisation with small independent cells,

---

[76] PRO FO 371/185233/BA1016/42 - *A Note on Terrorism in Aden*, Aden Intelligence Centre, 6 Dec. 1966
[77] *ibid.*
[78] PRO DEFE 11/533/E6407 - *The problem of South Arabia*, FO Draft Paper, 12 Oct. 1967
[79] *ibid.*

it was able to maintain its activity, despite the schism that occurred between the leaders and the rank and file. The Egyptians, in trying to control all the Nationalists, had detained the leaders of the NLF in Cairo from March 1966, but this merely allowed the cells in South Arabia to grow more independent and develop their own strategies. They held a second NLF Congress at Jibla in June 1966[80], during which the three who had gone to Cairo to announce the creation of FLOSY in January 1966 (Taha Moqbel, Salem Zain, Ali Salami) were expelled, as well as both al-Sha'bis, and a new eleven-man Politburo was elected reflecting the rise of the more militant cadres. Moreover, after Egypt had cut off supplies to the NLF, they were forced to get supplies independently. Increased political contributions were supplemented by bank robberies and "expropriation of money from the capitalist companies"[81]. The success of these ventures meant the NLF were no longer vulnerable to external threats to follow Cairo's policy. Thus, when the 'Alexandria Agreement' was announced in August 1966 to merge the NLF with FLOSY, and signed by Qahtan and Feisal al-Sha'bi and Abdul Fatah Ismail, the 'secondary leadership' was able to ignore it.

Moreover, after the return of those leaders from Cairo (September), pressure mounted for a formal break with FLOSY, which duly happened at the Third Congress at Khamr in November[82]. However, this Congress also saw Qahtan's faction re-integrated and ten people added to the General Command. These ten included Qahtan and Feisal al-Sha'bi, which meant that the old, semi-Nasserite NLF was back inside the organisation[83]. Also, the decision to increase co-operation with sympathizers in the Army and Police opened the Front to further 'right-wing' influence and meant that the internal struggles were far from over. What was clear, however, was that there was a powerful and independent group within the NLF who would never accept union with FLOSY. This group, unlike Qahtan's faction, was unresponsive to pressure from Egypt.

---

[80] Halliday, Fred - *Arabia without Sultans* (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1974) pp. 212-3
[81] Lackner - *P.D.R. Yemen* (Ithaca Press, London, 1985), p. 44; see also Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 212
[82] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p.213-4
[83] *ibid.*, p. 213-4

1967, therefore, was characterised by periods of conflict between the NLF and FLOSY. There were also, though, periods of truce as Nasser tried to re-assert control over the Nationalist campaign in South Arabia. The first serious fighting broke out in January 1966, and there were further outbreaks in June and September, before the final battle in early November saw the NLF, with SAA support, mop up the last FLOSY resistance. The latter were, in many ways, hampered by their Egyptian link since many people in South Arabia began to realise they did not want British rule swapped for Egyptian rule. In contrast, the NLF were "much more South Arabian"[84]. Moreover, whilst the NLF had internal disputes, FLOSY's leaders were even more divisive, vying with each other for Egyptian recognition. They were also split over the use of violence with, on the one hand, al Asnag, Obeid and Salami opposed, which meant they were of little use to the Egyptians, and, on the other, Maqawi and Basendwah who were more willing[85]. The actual numbers of active members of both organisation in Aden was remarkably small. British Intelligence believed there were only 25 activists in FLOSY, 25-30 in FLOSY's military group, the Popular Organisation of Revolutionary Forces (PORF), and 10 in the NLF[86]. These small numbers were, however, able to command support from among the trades unions, the police, students, tribesmen and the FRA/SAA.

FLOSY, in the end were largely undone by Egypt's defeat by Israel and Nasser having to withdraw his troops from the Yemen (in return for Saudi subsidies agreed at the Khartoum Arab Summit, 31 August 1967). This is not to say that FLOSY quickly declined, for they were still a force until early November. However, they lost their patron and the supply of arms and money dried up and their dependence on Egypt was the cause. There were still benefits to be had from that link, in particular the propaganda factor. According to Cairo Radio FLOSY were responsible for all major Nationalist successes in South Arabia, despite the majority being achieved by the

---

[84] PRO DEFE 13/572/13 - *Letter Trevelyan to George Brown*, 2 Jun. 1967
[85] PRO DEFE 11/527/5845 - *South Arabia - FLOSY/NLF*, Report by Brigadier N.St.G. Gribbon, 12 May 1967
[86] *ibid.* - these figures were from a source with access to FLOSY affairs

NLF[87]. British Intelligence was not completely fooled by this and recognised that the latter were becoming the dominant force in South Arabia:

> "Our recent assessments have been that NLF were far stronger then FLOSY up country and growing stronger in Aden ... NLF have shown that they are the dominant extremist element in both Crater and Sheikh Othman and that they have a large measure of support in the South Arabian Forces. To avenge the murder of an NLF leader they have issued what amounts to a declaration of war on FLOSY and FLOSY leaders hardly dare to show their faces in Aden"[88].

The relative strengths of the two Fronts can be seen by their abilities to move into areas once the British had started their withdrawal and the Federal rulers control collapsed. From June 1967 the Protectorate states saw British personnel evacuated from the Protectorate, then shortly afterwards either the NLF or FLOSY would move in. The first to fall to the Nationalists was Dhala which was taken by the NLF Radfanis on 20 June[89]. Then in August, after the Crater Mutiny had discredited the Federal Government once and for all, the rest of the Protectorate was overrun[90]. The NLF's operations in the Federation from 1963 onwards had given them the advantage and all the States, except for Aulaqi, fell to them rather than to FLOSY.

Attempted Negotiations

At the same time as the NLF and FLOSY were taking control of the Protectorate, once it was clear to the British that the Federation was finished, overtures were made to both Nationalist groups to form a National coalition government. The aim was to persuade the opposition leaders to work with the UN Mission, which was now in Geneva having failed to meet any of the possible leaders of South Arabia during their visit. FLOSY were still claiming sole representation for South Arabia and refused to participate in talks in Geneva,

---

[87] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 218 & 219
[88] PRO DEFE 11/529/6071 - *Trevelyan to FO*, 5 Jul. 1967
[89] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 217
[90] PRO DEFE 11/531/6247/1 - *High Commissioner to Foreign Office*, 28 Aug. 1967

> "if subservient elements, which do not represent the people attend. FLOSY has informed the UN Mission that it is the sole legitimate representative of the local people and that it will declare a total general strike throughout the Occupied South on the day the so-called meetings are due to open"[91].

FLOSY's claim to be the "sole legitimate representative" was somewhat exaggerated as at the time they were losing ground to the NLF throughout the Protectorate - the exceptions being Wahidi, the upper Aulaqi sheikhdom and the upper Aulaqi sultanate. Moreover, FLOSY were split among themselves, although there was still the propaganda backing of Cairo, which was an important weapon despite Nasser's need to withdraw from the Yemen. At the same time, it was becoming clear that the NLF had the support of the SAA officers who came from the states they had overrun, whilst the Aulaqi officers (under Nasser Buraik) had joined FLOSY[92].

With the collapse of the Federation confirmed, Humphrey Trevelyan (the last British High Commissioner, appointed in April 1967 to oversee the withdrawal) announced in a Press statement on 1 September that:

> "The Federal Government has ceased to govern. It no longer exercises control in the Federation, it is urgently necessary that a new Government should take over. I am satisfied that an effective Government can be formed by the political groups known as the NLF and FLOSY. I am ready to enter discussions immediately with these groups"[93].

However, both groups refused to negotiate with the British, although FLOSY now met with the UN Mission in Cairo (6 September)[94]. Both organisation were, in reality, probably more interested in defeating the other than forming a coalition government. There was further fighting between the two in September, followed by an attempted ceasefire announced by Maqawi and Feisal al-Sha'bi on 25 September, which was enforced by the SAA. The Army, in fact, was holding the balance of power since whichever group it supported would win, and if it decided to seize power itself it could have probably done so. However, at first the leading officers attempted to get the NLF

---

[91] PRO DEFE 11/530/6154 - *FO to Aden*, 3 Aug. 1967
[92] PRO DEFE 11/531/E6259/1 - *Report for CoS Meeting*, 31 Aug. 1967
[93] PRO DEFE 11/531/6266/1 - *Trevelyan to FO*, 31 August 1967
[94] PRO DEFE 11/532/E6304 - *Report for CoS Meeting*, 11 Sep. 1967

and FLOSY to negotiate with each other, as well as with the UK[95]. As the NLF became increasingly confident of victory, however, then the SAA had to choose between the two. Thus, at a meeting on 6 November the SAA came out in favour of the NLF[96]. This was no great surprise as it had been thought that the Army had closer ties to the NLF for a couple of months at least[97]. Moreover, FLOSY by this time was all but wiped out and the final fighting on 7 November saw the last resistance of FLOSY/PORF ended in Mansoura district.

The final victory of the NLF meant that the British had only one group to negotiate with. This was something of a relief as their attempts to involve either the NLF or FLOSY in a coalition government to take control of an independent South Arabia had been a failure. The reasons for the NLF victory are difficult to decipher, but one factor was that their formation and structure meant they could survive independently from Egypt. FLOSY proved they needed Nasser's patronage once it was withdrawn after the Six Day War. Moreover, the Egyptians themselves were becoming unpopular in both the Yemen and South Arabia and they came to be seen as an external power dominating smaller states themselves. Another factor could well have been the initial NLF success which set them out from other groups as they were seen to take on the British and cause them trouble, in particular in the Radfan. Furthermore, their ability to limit the amount of Intelligence the British received about them meant that the NLF suffered rare defeats. The Front's grassroots support throughout the Protectorate was vital to their success, especially in comparison to FLOSY's "urban based movement" and neglect of the rural areas[98]. Finally, the infiltration of the Federal forces, which ensured the support of the SAA, meant that the final victory was assured. A combination of all these factors saw the NLF survive the struggle against the British and rival Nationalist groups and take control of the new, independent South Arabia.

---

[95] PRO DEFE 11/531/6294 - *CinC ME to MoD UK,* 7 Sep. 1967
[96] PRO DEFE 11/534/E6495 - *Situation Report for Week Ending 7 Nov. 1967*
[97] PRO DEFE 11/530/E6185 - *Trevelyan to FO*, 13 Aug. 1967, "The South Arabian Army is more closely aligned with the N.L.F. than with FLOSY", the High Commissioner expected the Army to either battle with the Nationalists or deal with them as they take over each area
[98] Lackner - *op. cit.*, p. 48

'Fings ain't wot they used to be': An Orderly Withdrawal?

UN Involvement

The two main priorities concerning the British once the decision to withdraw had been taken were the safe evacuation of troops and, "if possible", to leave behind a viable independent state[99]. Unfortunately, the British seemed to be reacting to events, rather than pre-empting them, largely due to the lack of decent Intelligence information (see above). It therefore became impossible to preserve the Federation, which might not have been preservable anyway given its political and military weaknesses. The result was that the dates and operations for withdrawal had to be changed several times.

Nevertheless, efforts were made to achieve the two aims of preserving the Federation and ensuring an orderly withdrawal. To this end, the British asked for UN involvement, attempted to make contact with opposition groups, and tried to reform the Federation to make it a more attractive option to the people of South Arabia. All these failed and the final decision about who would take control once they left was taken out of British hands by the NLF victory over FLOSY.

In order to gain international recognition, and so bolster the Federation, the question of UN involvement was raised in Whitehall. The Foreign Office, on the whole, was in favour as, although asking the UN for help could be regarded as "an ignominious scuttle", the alternative was to maintain "a ramshackle, disunited and probably unviable South Arabian state, at great cost to the British taxpayer"[100]. Hopes for a successful UN visit were not rated as highly, but "in U.N. terms something might be gained by our having shown readiness to undertake this cooperation with the U.N."[101]. In other words, if it doesn't go well for South Arabia, then at least Britain might gain some

---

[99] PRO DEFE 11/525/5592 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia*, FO Note, 24 Feb. 1967

[100] PRO FO 371/185180/B1071/3 - *Minute from S. Falle to D. Greenhill*, 14 Jan 1966, Greenhill was in agreement, but Roger Allen at the FO was afraid of the consequences for the Persian Gulf

[101] PRO FO 371/185180/B1071/6 - *UN Involvement in South Arabia*, Paper by R. Jackling and F. Brown, Feb. 1966, Jackling in a letter to Roger Allen stresses the risks, but if there is no other option then could get advantage from associating the UN with South Arabia, 12 Feb.

credit from at least having tried. Britain's ambassador to the United Nations, Lord Caradon, was also in favour of the proposal since creating a viable single State in South Arabia was going to be difficult enough. However, the ambassador argued, "it will become impossible if we try to do the job on our own in isolation and in defiance of the Afro-Asian opposition which would mount as the months went by"[102]. The Foreign Secretary came out in support of Lord Caradon's view that UN observers, even only on the Federal side of the border was desirable since it was the Federation's best hope for international support once the British had withdrawn[103]. There was opposition to the proposal from the Chiefs of Staff who feared UN observers would:

> "provide a cloak for UAR inspired dissident activity and, by making it very difficult for us to continue with deniable operations, given the political risks which would be involved, would hamper our ability to deal with the dissidents"[104].

The "deniable operations" in question meant the covert support for the Royalists in Yemen. Therefore, if there were UN observers then the Defence Chiefs were concerned about maintaining the supplies to the Royalists across the Federal-Yemen border. The political value of these operations was questionable, but it was certainly preferable from a British point of view to keep them secret.

Eventually, it was agreed to invite a UN Mission to Aden to achieve what the British had so far failed to do: namely create an agreement between the Federal Ministers and the Nationalists. The hope was that the Mission would accept draft constitutional proposals put forward by the Federation as a basis for a future conference on the future government of South Arabia[105]. When the UN Mission did visit Aden (2-7 April, 1967), however, they refused to meet with the Federal representatives[106]. On the other hand, though, both the NLF and FLOSY refused to meet them, rendering the visit a failure. In fact, the arrival of the Mission was met by strikes and demonstrations

---

[102] PRO DEFE 11/504/5241A - *Lord Caradon to Mrs. White (FO)*, 23 Aug. 1966
[103] PRO DEFE 11/505/5283 - *Letter CoS to MoD*, 23 Sep. 1966
[104] PRO DEFE 11/505/5297 - *Acting Chief of Defence Staff to the Secretary of State for Defence*, Sep. 1966
[105] PRO DEFE 11/525/5592 - *op. cit.*
[106] Kostiner, Joseph - *op. cit.*, p. 146-7

organised by the Nationalists who were determined to undermine colonial rule and portray the situation in South Arabia as out of Federal and British control (which it was to a fairly large extent). Later attempts to persuade the Mission to meet with Federal representatives in Geneva became increasingly pointless as the NLF and FLOSY were destroying the Federation[107]. Once again, an attempt to preserve the Federation had proved fruitless and came too late to achieve anything.

Attempts to Broaden the Federation

Politically, British attempts to stabilise the country so as to make withdrawal easier, concentrated on broadening the basis and content of the Federal Government. Initial efforts were to reform the constitution and contact the South Arabian League and, later, FLOSY. The British were aware that the Federation would be dangerously weakened by their withdrawal, and, for the most part, were not optimistic about the future since "South Arabia is stony soil in which to set down the grass-roots of democracy"[108]. However, there was no obvious alternative to giving all the factions the opportunity "to behave in a civilised and democratic manner"[109]. It was only when the constitution proposals and intention to withdraw were announced that "the pressures be generated which will mould into shape - or disintegrate - the constituent parts of South Arabia"[110]. There was also an increased feeling among Adeni and Federal politicians that it might be necessary to invite back former opponents like al Asnag, Maqawi and other exiles for discussions about the future, a trend to which Turnbull gave secret encouragement[111]. Thus, informal talks were held between Federal representatives and SAL leaders as well as some non-Adeni members of FLOSY in March 1966 at Qarsh and Asmara, which were friendly but achieved little, especially as al Asnag and Maqawi did not turn up[112]. A side benefit of these talks was that the presence of Protectorate dissident leaders meant that anti-Federal activity was minimal. However, the lull in the

---

[107] *ibid.*
[108] PRO DEFE 11/502/4924 - *South Arabia: Constitutional Advance*, 17 Jan 1966, Report for DOP Committee
[109] *ibid.*
[110] *ibid.*
[111] PRO DEFE 11/503/5013 - *Turnbull to Marnham (CO)*, 7 Mar 1966
[112] PRO DEFE 11/504/5044 - *L.I.C. (Aden) Monthly Intelligence Summary for March, 1966*

unrest was also caused by the confusion among Nationalist leaders following the creation of FLOSY.

At the same time the Supreme Council was accepting the need for constitutional reform, and appeared willing to implement the UN Resolutions of 1949 and 1963 (calling for the end of British rule, free elections, universal suffrage and political reform) once discussions among all the political parties had taken place[113]. However, they were finding this difficult to achieve and had to postpone the proposed constitutional conference in London in August 1966 because most of the parties refused their invitations[114]. The Supreme Council also called for twenty Adeni delegates to sit on the Federal Council to discuss reform, and by 23 August 1966, all twenty seats had been filled. However, after one delegate was assassinated three more withdrew[115].

The attempts to involve the SAL in the political process continued, with the High Commissioner meeting Abdullah al-Jifri (brother of the SAL President) and Mohammed Salim Bawazir. Turnbull tried to get SAL help in establishing a South Arabian Government, and complained that so far "they had done precisely nothing but complain about being neglected"[116]. Jifri wanted the Western Aden Protectorate (WAP) Office to help the SAL arbitrate with the Federation, but Turnbull refused saying it needed an Arab arbitrator. Talks between the Federation and the SAL continued in October 1966, but again ended inconclusively with the SAL not yet willing to co-operate with the Federal Government[117]. The League were the people that the British Government most wanted to encourage, which was why attempts to include them in a South Arabian government persisted: "They are probably the best, or least bad, available combination of enough nationalism to be respectable with enough sense to be useful"[118]. In contrast FLOSY, NLF, OLOS and PSP were "bits of glass in the UAR-dominated kaleidoscope" varying in their "addiction to terrorism"[119].

---

[113] PRO FO 371/185231/BA1015/22 - *Telegram Aden to FO*, 19 Jul. 1966
[114] *ibid.*
[115] PRO DEFE 11/504/5240 - *CinC ME to MoD*, 23 Aug. 1966
[116] PRO FO 371/185247/BA10116/7 - *Record of Discussions between the High Commissioner and Mr. Abdullah al-Jifri and Mr. Mohammed Salim Bawazir of SAL*, 26 Sep. 1966
[117] PRO DEFE 11/505/5351 - *CinC ME to MoD*, 25 Oct. 1966
[118] PRO FO 371/185244/BA10112/58 - *Note by J.E. Marnham*, 18 Nov. 1966
[119] *ibid.*

Furthermore, Qahtan al-Sha'bi was an "unrepentant terrorist", Maqawi was "no longer taken seriously", al Asnag was a "windbag" and all of them, with the possible exception of al Asnag, were "a Bad Thing"[120]. These views raise the question of how British policy was determined since, by November 1966 when J.E. Marnham of the Foreign Office wrote this 'analysis', the SAL were no longer a major Nationalist force. They relied on Saudi Arabian aid, commanded minimal support in Aden, and even in the Protectorate they were losing followers to the more radical (and effective) NLF and, to a lesser degree, FLOSY. However, they would have provided the Federation with at least a gloss of Nationalist credit if they had co-operated, but they continued to hold off, probably out of fear of being labeled British stooges[121].

The reasons given by the League for non-co-operation were that the Federation had to accept the UN Resolutions (which they did in May 1966), then that the British should (did so in August). The final reason given was that they could not work with what the Committee of 24 called an "unrepresentative regime" until a UN Mission said what should be done[122]. Once the UN Mission was confirmed, the SAL again held off, still probably because they were afraid of what might happen if they were seen to co-operate with the British and Federation[123]. This again suggests that the SAL were not as powerful a force as the British seemed to think, otherwise they might have risked the NLF/FLOSY reprisals to stake a claim to Government. This was confirmed during 1967, and in particular once the British commenced their withdrawal from the Protectorate, as the SAL began to disappear from the scene. By the time the disintegration of the Federation was confirmed in September 1967, the only two Nationalist groups left were the NLF and FLOSY.

---

[120] *ibid.*
[121] PRO FO 371/185244/BA10112/58 - *South Arabia: Local Political and Labour Organisations*, Note by the Arabian Dept., 18 Nov. 1966
[122] PRO FO 371/185247/BA10116/9 - *Brief for Mr. Pedley on SAL*, 13 Dec. 1966
[123] PRO DEFE 11/525/5592 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia*, FO Note, 24 Feb. 1967

Defence Agreements

Whilst attempts to broaden the basis of the Federal Government were taking place, the Supreme Council was also trying to ensure its survival by appealing to Britain for military aid, or at least a Defence Treaty after independence. The White Paper had annulled the 1959 Treaty and 1963 White Paper which had promised British aid to the Federation in case of external attack. The decision to withdraw and withhold defence aid was denounced as a betrayal by both the Federal Rulers and the Conservative Opposition in London. A letter from the Supreme Council asked for promises that Britain would come to their aid if attacked after independence since "without this support it is possible that 130 years of British rule in South Arabia will end in disaster"[124]. This situation was not helped by the attack on Nuqub in Beihan by Yemeni/UAR aircraft in September 1966 which, like earlier infringements of the border, caused a split among British policy-makers and between Aden and London. Turnbull, like Johnston and Trevaskis before him, warned of the danger of no retaliation undermining the British position and demoralising Federal Forces since, "Another wave of resentment and disillusion could put at hazard our whole programme of extricating ourselves from South Arabia"[125]. However, once again, London vetoed any retaliation, much to the disgust of the Supreme Council and to the disappointment of the High Commissioner and the military in Aden. The Ministry of Defence highlighted the lack of action as a serious mistake since:

> "probably no single factor has done more to undermine the confidence of the Federal Government and local rulers in British policy than our failure to respond to the Nuqub air attack and our continued refusal to give any guarantee of reprisal against future aggressive incursion of this type"[126].

There was eventually to be a re-thinking of policy, however, as it dawned on the policy-makers after repeated warnings from the military and the Foreign Office of the consequences of doing nothing. The Defence Chiefs argued that nothing short of a

---

[124] PRO DEFE 11/504/5259 - *Letter from Chairman of the Federal Supreme Council to the Prime Minister*, 1 Sep. 1966
[125] PRO DEFE 11/505/5291 - *Turnbull to FO*, 28 Sep. 1966
[126] PRO DEFE 11/506/5393 - *Additional Support for Middle East Command*, MoD Report, 21 Nov. 1966

British undertaking to protect South Arabia after independence until the main UAR threat had been removed would,

> "suffice to give us a chance of making South Arabia ready for meaningful independence, or to prevent a calamitous loss of confidence in Britain throughout the Area and especially in the Persian Gulf"[127].

There was never a question of reversing the decision to withdraw as soon as possible[128]. Nevertheless, there was a realisation that to prevent a loss of prestige and avoid instability in the region, then a defence commitment to South Arabia might well be necessary. The overriding priority here, though, was not concern for the future of an independent South Arabia, but concern for an orderly evacuation and for Britain's interests in the Gulf. Without a defence agreement, Federal forces would find it difficult to maintain internal security, let alone an external attack from the UAR, which would have had serious consequences for British interests:

> "The consequences of this situation on internal security up to withdrawal, on the future British position in the Persian Gulf, and on the future stability of South Arabia, have either not been grasped or have been discounted"[129].

The situation in South Arabia was, however, getting to the stage where even a defence agreement might not save the Federation. Turnbull was warned by the Foreign Office that "The chance of our being able to set up a lasting, unified and viable state in South Arabia after 1968 are, as we must recognise, small", but Britain should still try to grant a degree of self-reliance to the new state[130]. To this end, there was a reversal of policy as the decision was taken to grant promises of defence aid to the future independent South Arabia. The obstacles to securing an orderly withdrawal and leaving a viable state behind were highlighted as: the Federal forces having to take over the full security burden; the lack of friends abroad the Federation had; and that,

---

[127] PRO DEFE 11/506/5415 - *Brief for Secretary of State for Defence for OPD Meeting*, 2 Dec. 1966
[128] *ibid.*, see also DEFE 11/506/5391 - *Brief for Secretary of State for Defence for DOP Meeting*, 16 Nov. 1966, which recommends withdrawal early in 1968 since Britain could not hope to strengthen the Federation enough "so as to give it a chance of surviving if the UAR are resolved to crush it after we leave", this was written when it was still presumed there would be no defence aid promised
[129] PRO DEFE 11/506/5390 - *South Arabia: Constitutional Advance to Independence*, 18 Nov. 1966
[130] PRO DEFE 11/506/5432 - *Letter from FO to Turnbull*, 8 Dec. 1966

> "the terrorist campaign in Aden ... has not been defeated. It has terrorised Aden not only out of effective co-operation in Federal constitutional advance but out of participation in matters that are specifically Adeni"[131].

Therefore to achieve Britain's stated aims, there was a need to equip an independent state with the means to preserve itself, encourage constitutional progress and gain international recognition for the emerging state. The Federal Government, in fact, wanted Britain to relinquish sovereignty in the near future, but Britain was loathe to lose control over the port, Khormaksar airfield and water supplies. Therefore, the Foreign Office proposed to grant independence on 1 November 1967 and support an application by the Federation for membership of the UN. Furthermore Britain would leave ground forces in South Arabia until 31 January 1968, and a small air contingent until 30 April 1968[132]. However, the Foreign Office also warned that, "The alternative [to granting these concession] might very well be a degree of disintegration in South Arabia which would prevent achievement of either of the objectives"[133].
This would give the new state time to establish itself, and also meant that the onus of "any later collapse would be on that state's weakness rather than on our own abrupt departure"[134]. These proposals were put to the Federal Government, who felt they were inadequate, but asked for time to consider them[135]. The Ministers then rejected them as they wanted discussions with the UN Mission (who then refused to meet with the Federal representatives)[136]. The Ministers deferral of a decision, therefore, made the date for the final withdrawal uncertain, which in turn made the plans for evacuation very difficult[137].

Final Attempts to Save the Federation

There were further attempts to give the Supreme Council aid. Lord Shackleton (then temporary resident Minister in Aden) flew out to South Arabia in April 1967. Despite

---

[131] PRO DEFE 11/525/5592 - *Possible Steps over South Arabia*, FO Paper, 24 Feb. 1967
[132] *ibid.*
[133] *ibid.*
[134] *ibid.*
[135] PRO DEFE 11/526/5712 - *Record of Meeting in the Foreign Office on 29 March, 1967: South Arabia Action Group*
[136] PRO DEFE 11/526/5652 - *Brief for Secretary of State for Defence*, 22 Mar 1967
[137] *ibid.*

restoring the date for independence to 1 January 1968 and promising to station a naval force in the area for six months after, the post-independence proposals were again rejected by the Federal Ministers[138]. Part of the problem was that the main reason for withdrawing was to cut costs in the Defence budget, but now there appeared a need for increased spending to build up the Federation into a viable state. In fact, Britain promised military aid amounting to £5.5m capital expenditure plus £10.25m each year for three years, but Trevelyan pointed out this was not enough to make the Federal forces strong enough to hold their own[139]. Increasingly, however, these promises became meaningless, especially after the Crater Mutiny which meant another re-think of British policy was needed. Trevelyan warned that:

> "Radical measures are necessary. The Federal Government in its present form will never be able to govern nor control its armed forces. We cannot take firm measures to control security because, if we do, there will be a mutiny in the South Arabian Forces. It is essential that there should be a Government which can control its forces and to which those forces can be loyal."[140].

The same telegram stated that "Most of the Sultans and their representatives should go home" and that a broad-based government should be formed. This was to include elements from the present government, the forces, the civil service, trades unions, NLF and SAL (all the FLOSY leaders were out of the country). This would have been difficult but,

> "If we do nothing, we shall be faced with a worsening situation and unless we re-establish confidence within the South Arabian Army we risk simultaneous FLOSY/NLF terrorism and collapse of the South Arabian forces"[141].

There were attempts to achieve the broad-based government, but neither FLOSY nor the NLF responded to British or Federal overtures and opposed last-minute attempts by Hasan Bayumi to form a broadly based provisional administration[142]. The policy of

---

[138] PRO DEFE 11.527/5800 - *Cabinet Paper on South Arabia*, 8 May 1967, DEFE 11/528/5885 - *Situation Report week ending 23 May 1967*
[139] PRO DEFE 11/528/5939 - *High Commissioner's Proposals on South Arabian Defence*, 2 Jun. 1967
[140] PRO DEFE 11/529/6018 - *High Commissioner to Foreign Office*, 27 Jun. 1967
[141] *ibid.*
[142] PRO DEFE 11/529/6114 - *Situation Report w/e 18 Jul. 1967*

widening the appeal of the Federal Government was maintained, but eventually the British had to admit defeat and announce the end of the Federation. The result was that, as Trevelyan had predicted might happen, the British had "to sit and watch the battle being fought out, while we are still responsible for what is happening"[143].

Once the Federation had collapsed, all the British could do was concentrate on security for their own people and installations and appeal in vain for talks with FLOSY and NLF whilst they were fighting each other. On 2 November, 1967, the British announced the complete withdrawal of their forces by the end of the month and after the NLF claimed control of Aden preparations were made for the negotiation to hand over power. These took place in Geneva from 21 November to the 29th, the main problem being the question of aid as the British, "mean as ever" according to Halliday and using the excuse of financial limitations, bartered the NLF down from their original demand of £60 million[144]. Eventually an agreement was reached involving £12 million (including military equipment) which was conditional on "good behaviour"[145]. All that was left was for the final evacuation of troops to take place.

Conclusion

The final British troops had withdrawn by 3 p.m. on 29 November, 1967[146]. The following day the People's Republic of South Yemen was proclaimed, with the leader of the NLF, Qahtan al Sha'bi, as its first President. The final months had seen the majority of the institutions set up in nearly 129 years of British rule either collapse or taken over by the most extreme Nationalist group in South Arabia, making South Yemen the only Marxist state in the Middle East. The failure of the British to preserve the Federation, in particular after the Crater Mutiny in June 1967, should not have been a surprise given the repeated warnings of Luce, Johnston, Trevaskis and Turnbull (Trevelyan's main task was to arrange for a safe withdrawal). The lack of attention

[143] PRO DEFE 11/530/E6182/1 - *H.C. Aden to Foreign Office*, 10 Aug. 1967
[144] Halliday - *op. cit.*, p. 220-1
[145] PRO DEFE 11/534/E6600 - *FO to Geneva*, 28 Nov. 1967
[146] PRO DEFE 11/534/E6603 - *CinC ME to MoD UK*, 29 Nov. 1967

paid to the Colonial Office representatives in South Arabia was a costly mistake from a British point of view. Had more effort been made to bolster the Federation and broaden its political base, then the newly independent state might well have maintained friendly relations with the UK. By November 1967 and the NLF victory, however, the British were relieved to be rid of the burden of South Arabia. This was reflected in the reaction of Richard Crossman, a Labour Cabinet Minister, to Foreign Secretary George Brown's announcement that the withdrawal would be over by the end of November rather than January 1968:

> "That the regime he [Brown] backed should have been overthrown by terrorists and has forced our speedy withdrawal is nothing but good fortune. It now looks as though we shall get out of Aden without losing a British soldier, chaos will rule soon after we've gone, and there'll be one major commitment cut - thank God"[147].

[147] Crossman, Richard - *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume Two: Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, 1966-68*, (Hamish Hamilton and Jonathan Cape, London, 1976), p. 541

Conclusion

The withdrawal from Aden was not, strictly speaking 'the end of Empire', given the continued presence of British troops in the Gulf and the Far East as well as certain smaller territories in the Caribbean, South Atlantic and Pacific (which are still British 'Overseas Territories' to this day). However, it was certainly the beginning of the end, at the very least. Whilst it would be more accurate to say that the end of the Indian Empire or the Suez Crisis marked the beginning of the end, in the minds of Whitehall policy makers Great Britain still had a role 'east of Suez' following the debacle of 1956. Therefore, the 'Empire' continued until the late 1960s, despite the increasing evidence that Britain was no longer able to maintain such a costly overseas presence. The defeat at the hands of the diverse Arab Nationalist groups in South Arabia was merely the final nail in the coffin and hastened the military withdrawal from the Gulf and Far East by the early 1970s. British policy towards Aden and the Protectorate from 1945 onwards had aimed at maintaining an international presence for Great Britain, at least in one region of the world. In other words, the continuation of colonial rule in South West Arabia in the 1950s and 1960s was an attempt to avert the end of Empire. Ultimately, though, the reality of the international and domestic situation forced the issue upon Wilson's Labour Government.

Whilst the withdrawal from Aden became increasingly inevitable during the 1960s, as the burden of overseas commitments was straining the domestic economy, the manner of withdrawal remained unclear. There were numerous occasions when British policymakers and/or colonial officials could have improved the situation and relieved the pressure on the Legislative Council or Federation, their only allies in South Arabia. Instead, the opposition to British rule and the Federation grew to such an extent that the most extreme of the Nationalists, the National Liberation Front, were able to claim victory over the traditional notables and establish the only 'Marxist' state in the Middle East. They were also the sole group linked to the Arab Nationalist Movement to achieve power in the region, a feat achieved independently of the dominant Arab

Nationalist power, Egypt. The success of the NLF meant that the People's Republic of South Yemen, later the People's Democratic Republic of South Yemen, was one of the few former colonies or mandates to break all links to the former colonial power in the region from the moment of independence.

British policy towards Aden, and in fact towards the entire 'east of Suez' region which dominated foreign and defence policy during the 1950s and 1960s, was hampered by the lack of co-operation between the various Whitehall departments with interests in the region, and also by poor communications between Aden and London. The prime example of this was the relationship between the Ministry of Defence and the Colonial Office, with the former seeking to establish long-term military bases in successive colonies whilst the latter was looking to withdraw from empire. This was shown in Singapore, Kenya and Aden; on each occasion the military were assuming long-term sovereignty for their plans whilst colonial officials were assuming self-government would be implemented for the colony in question. Iain Macleod, as Secretary of State for the Colonies between 1959 and 1961, was one of the prime instigators of the withdrawal from empire. This was especially true following Harold Macmillan's 'winds of change' speech in 1959 which led to independence being granted to the African colonies. Therefore, the decision to proceed with the construction of the military base in Kenya in 1957 preceded the shift in colonial policy, but was still short-sighted. The Defence chiefs, despite the grant of independence to Ghana, and the imminent grant of independence to Nigeria, maintained the view that colonial rule in Kenya would survive for many years. This view continued until 1960 despite Macleod's announcement the previous year that a sweeping transfer of power was necessary in East Africa. Therefore by the time Kenya was granted independence in 1961, the Army had invested millions of pounds in a base which had hardly been used.

The actual decision-making process regarding Aden and the Protectorate hardly helped the British situation. After 1945, the Colonial Office, Ministry of Defence, Foreign Office and Treasury were all involved in the process. The final word usually lay with the Treasury given that any policy shift involved expenditure of some form. Therefore, hanging over every debate between the other three departments regarding British policy

in South Arabia was the knowledge that the Treasury's view had to be taken into account. In fact, it was the need for cuts in British expenditure which forced the final decision to withdraw. However, the other departments involved still had an important voice in deciding how to best work within Treasury limitations. The Colonial Office was the Department with immediate responsibility for Aden and the Protectorate, and so frequently had the most influence. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence, which was responsible for the base itself, had to be consulted, whilst the Foreign Office, with its concern for the Britain's standing in the world at large, always had an opinion.

Given their experiences in Kenya it is difficult to understand why the military were willing to invest so much money in an enlarged base in Aden, especially after Macleod had announced in 1961 that retaining bases in colonial or newly independent countries was an unworkable policy. Nevertheless, the Ministry of Defence proceeded with the construction of the base, trusting in the belief that independence was years away and ignoring the rising tide of nationalist opposition to British rule in South Arabia. Under Sandys, however, the Colonial Office was more sympathetic to the Army's base strategy, as shown by the, frequently acrimonious, communications between the Colonial Office and Sir Kennedy Trevaskis in Aden over the best policy to maintain the base for the foreseeable future, and beyond independence if possible. The fact that the base strategy itself was severely flawed was a view that rarely surfaced, despite the forced withdrawals from the Canal Zone, Cyprus and Kenya within six years (1954 to 1960). Admittedly the base in Aden had been used to protect British interests in Oman (from 1957), in Kuwait (1961) and in East Africa (the mutinies in Kenya, Tanganyika and Uganda in 1964). However, the base itself was coming under increasing attacks from Nationalists in Aden, and was politically and financially a very expensive method of defending British interests.

The Army was the strongest adherent to the base strategy. It was the service with the most to lose if defence policy priority had been shifted to air and naval mobility, with the reliance on small, tactically mobile forces which could be flown/sailed into trouble spots at short notice. The inter-service rivalry did not help the development of this policy. The reluctance to alter the base strategy meant that, despite Sir William Luce's

predictions in the late 1950s of independence for Aden within ten years, the defence of British interests overseas continued to rely on large bases. The fact that these bases were clearly unpopular with large sections of the local population did not seem to affect British military thinking or planning, which was why millions more pounds were pumped into the Aden base in the early 1960s.

The situation in Aden and the Protectorate by the early 1960s, though, should have sent warning signals to the defence chiefs that history was repeating itself again. The troubles of the mid-1950s had shown the difficulty of quelling tribal dissidence in the Protectorate, whilst the strikes and demonstrations of the trade unions were evidence of the rise of Arab Nationalism in the Colony. Nevertheless, the massive construction programme at Khormaksar was implemented in 1959, although within five years the troops stationed there were more involved with defending the base than defending British overseas interests. The aim of the base was to defend Western oil concerns in the Persian Gulf, and the Kuwait operation of 1961 was used as the prime example to back this up. However, by the mid-1960s, the Commander-in-Chief of Middle East Forces was having to ask for reinforcements in order to provide the minimum number of troops necessary to mount an offensive operation in Kuwait should it be threatened by Iraq again. The reason for this was that extra troops were having to be sent into the Protectorate to deal with the NLF-led rebellion, as well as security operations within the Colony itself. Therefore, the actual value of the base by the mid-1960s was questionable since it was uncertain how many acclimatised troops could have been spared to deal with an Iraqi threat without threatening the entire British situation in South Arabia.

When the decision to withdraw was actually taken, however, it was not due to concerns about the military efficacy of the base, or its increasingly questionable value. Instead, it was British domestic economic concerns which forced the issue, since Healey was willing to continue maintaining overseas interests had the US been willing to fund the expense of them. It was only after Washington had rejected this request that the Defence Secretary had to take the decision to cut overseas commitments in February 1966 in order to relieve the economic burden on the UK. From that point on, not only

was Aden and the Federation to achieve the political independence promised in 1964, but it was also to be militarily independent since there was to be no British base or defence commitment to the new state. This was then confirmed by the success of the NLF, a group which the British Government were unwilling to defend after independence, as they had considered with the Federation). The NLF, in turn, were equally unwilling to be defended by the former colonial power.

The end of British rule in Aden could have been very different however, had London listened to their officials living and working in the colony. William Luce's warnings and advice in the late 1950s, about the course of events that was likely to occur, proved remarkably accurate. The Colonial Office would have done well to heed the Governor's warning that unless substantial political and constitutional concessions were granted to the Colony, then British rule would not last more than another ten years. The belief that sovereignty was vital in order to control the base, however, meant that Luce's advice to gradually relinquish control was ignored. British priorities were the base and interests in the Gulf first, with the needs and interests of the Colony a distant second. However, had more concessions been granted to the 'moderates' in Aden, or attempts made at an earlier date to negotiate with the Nationalists like Abdullah al Asnag, then the situation could have concluded very differently. Use of the base could have been extended, especially if the British had concentrated on promoting the economic benefits of their presence since al Asnag admitted that he did not want to see the base evacuated given its value to the local economy. However, the view that sovereignty over, at the very least, the base areas meant that concessions and negotiations with the Nationalists were never granted until it was too late. The belief was that to have done so would have been undermining British rule. The often expressed view of the military that sovereignty was useless without local goodwill was largely ignored by the politicians, in particular Duncan Sandys, until it was effectively too late.

The other major failing of British policy was the combination of over reliance on the traditional rulers in the Protectorate and Federation, and inability to fully support them when they came under attack from the NLF and FLOSY in the 1960s. The British links

with the rulers dated back to the 1840s and Haines' attempts to extend trading links from Aden into the hinterland. However, the real extension of British influence into the hinterland only took place with the signing of Protectorate treaties in the 1890s and 1900s, and the advisory treaties in the 1930s and 1940s. These treaties, though, linked the British in Aden to one ruler or tribe, which often aroused the opposition of a rival tribe. This rival tribe were then usually supported by either the Ottomans or the Imam in an attempt to destabilise the hinterland to the detriment of British interests. Furthermore, the advisory treaties involved increased British interference in the traditional livelihood of many of the tribes, not least the building of roads and introduction of motorised transport damaging the transportation of goods by camel, a source of income for many of the tribes. Instead of subsidising these tribes for their loss of income, no real attempt was made to improve the livelihood of those affected, which created a large number of disaffected tribesmen and potential dissidents. The almost inevitable outbreak of unrest in the 1950s was a major setback for British attempts at modernising the Protectorate but once more, instead of compensating the disaffected for their loss of income, the British made no attempt at subsidising the development of the region.

The creation of the Federation in 1959 was another opportunity for the political and economic development of the hinterland, but instead reinforced the feudal rule of the shaikhs and sultans. Had these rulers been persuaded to introduce political concessions to their opponents and the British invested more money into the construction of roads, schools, hospitals and economic development, then it was very possible that many of the grievances of the dissident tribes could have been alleviated. Admittedly it was also very possible that this could have backfired and further destabilised the region, but it was still better than maintaining the status quo which was a series of tribal revolts in the 1950s and 1960s. This situation was then exploited by the NLF to their advantage, using the tribal dissidence to further their own ambitions of a 'national revolution'. Even when this rebellion increased to the level of attacks on the Federation from across the border by Yemeni and Egyptian artillery and aeroplanes, the British response was muted. Instead of wholeheartedly supporting their few allies in the Federation, the rulers, by fighting fire with fire, as successive High Commissioners demanded, London

rarely did more than complain at the United Nations. There were attempts to undermine the Yemeni Republicans and Egyptians through covert support for the Royalists in the civil war, but this achieved little in terms of stabilising the Federation. This combination of supporting the increasingly unpopular, traditional, feudal rulers, but only to a certain extent, meant that the Federation was continually undermined by the NLF and FLOSY-led rebellion.

British policy in South Arabia after World War Two, therefore, had little success to show for all the money invested in the base (but not the Federation or Colony) and the effort exerted by those officials who knew the area best. Whilst it is always easier to criticise with the advantage of hindsight, there were many at the time who tried to point out the failings of British policy, not least the last Governors and High Commissioners, Tom Hickinbotham, William Luce, Charles Johnson, Kennedy Trevaskis, Richard Turnbull and Humphrey Trevelyan. All these men attempted to warn the Colonial Office of the dangers in not granting more concessions or giving more financial support to their few allies in South Arabia, the 'moderate' politicians in the Colony, and the rulers in the Federation. However, the overriding priority of British policy, whether under a Conservative or Labour Government, was maintenance of a military base to defend overseas interests and the east of Suez policy. This meant that the base came before everything and was the only institution to receive any real political or financial support from London. Had more concern been shown for the political and economic development and diversification of Aden and the Federation, then the situation could have been a lot different. However, the end result was yet another example of a forced military withdrawal and the establishment of an unfriendly successor government. The difference with South Yemen, in comparison to other former colonies, was the absence of 'God Save the Queen' as the British withdrew and the immediate establishment of a self-proclaimed Marxist state.

Bibliography

Public Record Office

Cabinet Office Archives: CAB 148 - *Defence and Overseas Policy (Official) Committee*

Colonial Office: CO 846, 853, 858, 859, 935, 936, 968, 1015, 1027, 1032, 1034, 1037, 1054, 1055 - *Aden Department*

Foreign Office: FO 371 - *Arabian Peninsula*

Ministry of Defence: DEFE 4, 5, 6 - *Chiefs of Staff Committee*
DEFE 7 - *British Forces, Middle East*
DEFE 11, 13, 24, 25, 28 - *British Forces, Aden*

Primary Sources

Books

Crossman, Richard - *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume One: Minister of Housing 1964-66* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd. and Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1975)
- *Diaries of a Cabinet Minister, Volume Two: Lord President of the Council and Leader of the House of Commons, 1966-68* (Hamish Hamilton Ltd. and Jonathan Cape Ltd., London, 1976)

Crouch, Michael - *An Element of Luck: To South Arabia and Beyond* (The Radcliffe Press, London, 1993)

De La Billiere, General Sir Peter - *Looking for Trouble: SAS to Gulf Command* (Harper Collins, London, 1994)

Harper, Stephen - *Last Sunset: What Happened in Aden* (Collins, London, 1978)

Healey, Denis - *The Time of My Life* (Michael Joseph, London, 1989)

Hickinbotham, Sir Tom - *Aden* (Constable & Co. Ltd., London, 1958)

HMSO - *Aden: Report for the Years 1957 and 1958* (HMSO, London, 1961)

Ingrams, Doreen and Leila (eds.) - *Records of Yemen 1798-1960*, Vols. 11-15 (Anthony Rowe Ltd., Chippenham, 1993)

Johnston, Sir Charles - *The View from Steamer Point* (Cox & Wyman Ltd., London, 1964)

Lunt, James - *Imperial Sunset: Frontier Soldiering in the Twentieth Century* (Macdonald, London, 1981)

Macmillan, Harold - *At the end of the day, 1961-1963* (Macmillan, London, 1973)

Mayhew, Christopher - *Time to Explain* (Hutchinson, London, 1987)

Trevaskis, Sir Kennedy - *Shades of Amber* (Hutchinson & Co., London, 1968)

Trevelyan, Sir Humphrey - *The Middle East in Revolution* (Macmillan, London, 1970)

Wilson, Harold - *The Labour Government, 1964-1970: A Personal Record* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1971)

Articles

Kelly, J.B. - 'Recollections and Reflections of a British Diplomat', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 9, no. 3, Oct. 1973, pp. 363-70

Hinchcliffe, Peter - 'South Arabian Federation', *Lecture given to commemorate 'The overseas Civil Service 1837-1997'*, 12 July 1999

Other Primary Sources

Trevaskis Papers, Rhodes House, Oxford - *MSS. Brit. Emp. s367*

Secondary Sources

Books

Abu-Izzedin, Nejla M. - *Nasser of the Arabs: and Arab Assessment* (Third World Centre for Research and Publishing Ltd., London, 1981)

Ashton, Nigel John - *Eisenhower, Macmillan and the Problem of Nasser: Anglo-American Relations and Arab Nationalism, 1955-59* (Macmillan Press Ltd., London, 1996)

Balfour-Paul, Glen - *The End of Empire in the Middle East* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1991)

Bidwell, Robin - *The Two Yemens* (Longman Westview Press, Harlow, 1983)

Brown, L. Carl - *International Politics and the Middle East* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1984)

Bujra, Abdalla S. - *The Politics of Stratification: A Study of Political Change in a South Arabian Town* (Oxford University Press, London, 1971)

Burrowes, Robert D. - *The Yemen Arab Republic: The Politics of Development, 1962-1986* (Croom Helm Ltd., Beckenham, 1987)

Calvocoressi, Peter - *World Politics since 1945* (Longman, London, 1968)

Cleveland, William L. - *A History of the Modern Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1994)

Confino, M. & Shamir, S. (eds.) - *The USSR and the Middle East* (Israel Universities Press, Tel Aviv, 1973)

Cross, Colin - *The Fall of the British Empire, 1918-1968* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1968)

Darby, Phillip - *British Defence Policy East of Suez, 1947-1968* (Oxford University Press, London, 1973)

Darwin, John - *Britain and Decolonisation: The retreat from Empire in the post-war World* (Macmillan, London, 1988)

Dawisha, A.I. & K. - *The Soviet Union in the Middle East* (Heinemann, London, 1982)

Douglas, J. Leigh - *The Free Yemeni Movement, 1935-1962* (American University of Beirut, Beirut, 1987)

Dresch, Paul - *Tribes, Government and History in Yemen* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1989)

Edmonds, Robin - *Soviet Foreign Policy, 1962-73: The Paradox of Super Power* (Oxford University Press, London, 1975)

Freedman, Robert O. - *Soviet Policy toward the Middle East since 1970* (Praeger, New York, 1975)

Gavin, R.J. - *Aden under British Rule, 1839-1967* (C. Hurst & Co., London, 1975)

Geraghty, Tony - *Who Dares Wins: The Story of the SAS, 1950-1980* (William Collins Sons & Co., Glasgow, 1980)

Gerges, Fawaz A. - *The Superpowers and the Middle East* (Westview Press, Boulder, 1994)

Golan, Galia - *Soviet Policies in the Middle East from World War Two to Gorbachev* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990)

Halliday, Fred - *Revolution and Foreign Policy: the Case of South Yemen, 1967-1987* (Cambridge University Press, Cambridge, 1990)
- *Arabia without Sultans* (Penguin Books Ltd., Harmondsworth, 1974)

Hopwood, Derek (ed.) - *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics* (George Allen and Unwin Ltd., London, 1972)

Hough, Jerry F. - *The Struggle for the Third World* (The Brookings Institution, Washington, 1986)

Hourani, Albert - *A History of the Arab Peoples* (Faber and Faber Ltd., London, 1991)

Howe, Stephen - *Anticolonialism in British Politics: The Left and the End of Empire* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1993)

Ingrams, Harold - *The Yemen* (John Murray, London, 1963)

Kelly, J.B. - *Arabia, the Gulf and the West* (Weidenfeld & Nicolson, London, 1980)

Kerr, Malcolm H. - *The Arab Cold War: Gamal 'Abd al-Nasir and His Rivals, 1958-1970* (Oxford University Press, Oxford, 1971)

Kirkman, W.P. - *Unscrambling an Empire: A critique of British Colonial Policy, 1956-1966* (Chatto & Windus, London, 1966)

Kolodriej, E.A. & Kanet, R.E. (eds.) - *The Soviet Union and the Arab-Israeli Conflict* (Macmillan, London, 1989)

Kostiner, Joseph - *Yemen: The Tortuous Quest for Unity, 1990-94* (Royal Institute of International Affairs, London, 1996)
- *The Struggle for South Yemen* (Croom Helm, London, 1984)

Labour Party Research Department - *Twelve Wasted Years* (Labour Party, London, 1963)

Lackner, Helen - *P.D.R. Yemen* (Ithaca Press, London, 1985)

Lapping, Brian - *End of Empire* (Granada, London, 1985)

Lederer, I.J. & Vucinich, W.S. (eds.) - *The Soviet Union and the Middle East* (Hoover Institute Press, Stanford, 1969)

Louis, William Roger - *The British Empire in the Middle East, 1945-51* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1984)

Mansfield, Peter - *A History of the Middle East* (Viking, London, 1991)

Messick, Brinkley - *The Calligraphic State* (University of California Press, Berkeley, 1993)

Neillands, Robin - *Fighting Retreat: The British Empire 1947-1997* (Hodder & Stoughton, London, 1996)

Nutting, Anthony - *Nasser* (Constable, London, 1972)

Reynolds, David - *Britannia Overruled: British Policy and World Power in the Twentieth Century* (Longman, London, 1991)

Riad, Mahmoud - *The Struggle for Peace in the Middle East* (Quartet Books Ltd., London, 1981)

Rubinstein, Alvin Z. - *Red Star on the Nile* (Princeton University Press, Princeton, 1977)
(ed.)- *Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World* (Praeger, New York, 1975)

Sayigh, Yezid & Shlaim, Avi - *The Cold War and the Middle East* (Clarendon Press, Oxford, 1997)

Shepherd Robert - *Iain Macleod* (Hutchinson, London, 1994)

Shlaim, Avi - *War and Peace in the Middle East* (Penguin Books, New York, 1994)

Shlaim, Avi, Jones, Peter & Sainsbury, Keith - *British Foreign Secretaries since 1945* (David and Charles, Newton Abbot, 1977)

Spiegel, Stephen L. - *The Other Arab-Israeli Conflict: Making America's Middle East Policy from Truman to Reagan* (University of Chicago Press Ltd., London, 1985)

Stephens, Robert - *Nasser: A Political Biography* (Allen Lane The Penguin Press, London, 1971)

Stookey, Robert W. - *America and the Arab States: An Uneasy Encounter* (John Wiley & Sons Inc., New York, 1975)

Vatikiotis, P.J. - *Arab and Regional Politics in the Middle East* (Croom Helm Ltd., Kent 1984)

Waterfield, Gordon - *Sultans of Aden* (John Murray, London, 1968)

Yapp, M.E. - *The Near East since World War One*, (Longman, London, 1991)

Articles

Atherton Jr., Alfred L. - 'The Soviet role in the Middle East: an American View', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4, Autumn 1985, pp. 688-715

Bujra, A.S. - 'Urban elites and colonialism: the nationalist elites of Aden and South Arabia', *Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 6, no. 2, May 1970, pp. 189-211

Dawisha, A.I. - 'Intervention in the Yemen: An Analysis of Egyptian Perceptions and Policies', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 29, no. 1, Winter 1975, pp. 47-63

Halliday, Fred - 'The Formation of Yemeni Nationalism: Initial Reflections' in *Rethinking Nationalism in the Arab Middle East* eds. James Jankowski & Israel Gershon (Columbia University Press, New York, 1997)

Kelidar, A.R. - 'The Arabian Peninsula in Arab and Power Politics' in *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics* ed. Derek Hopwood (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1972), pp. 145-59

Kelly, J.B. - 'Hadramaut, Oman, Dhufar: The Experience of Revolution', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 12, no. 2, May 1976, pp. 213-30

Kerr, Malcolm H. - 'Soviet Influence in Egypt, 1967-1973' in *Soviet and Chinese Influence in the Third World*, ed. Alvin Rubinstein, pp. 88-108

Khalidi, Rashid - 'Arab Views of the Soviet role in the Middle East', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 39, no. 4, Autumn 1985, pp. 716-32

Kostiner, Joseph - 'Arab Radical Politics: Al-Qawmiyyun al-Arab and the Marxists in the Turmoil of South Yemen, 1963-1967', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 17, no. 4, October 1981, pp. 454-76

Liebesny, Herbert J. - 'Administration and Legal Development in Arabia: Aden Colony and Protectorate', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 9, no. 4, Autumn 1955, pp. 385-96

Luqman, Ali Muhammad - 'Education and the Press in South Arabia' in *The Arabian Peninsula: Society and Politics*, ed. Derek Hopwood (George Allen & Unwin Ltd., London, 1972), pp. 255-68

Muheirez, Abdullah Ahmed - 'Cultural Development in the People's Democratic Republic of Yemen', paper presented to the *International Symposium on Contemporary Yemen*, University of Exeter, 15-18 July 1983

Nadelmann, Ethan - 'Setting the Stage: American Policy toward the Middle East, 1961-66', *The International Journal of Middle Eastern Studies*, Vol. 14, 1982, pp. 435-57

Smith, S.C. - 'Rulers and Residents: British Relations with the Aden Protectorate, 1937-1959', *Middle Eastern Studies*, vol. 31, no. 3, July 1995, pp. 509-23

Sultan Nagy - 'The Genesis of the call for Yemeni Unity', paper presented to the *International Symposium on Contemporary Yemen*, University of Exeter, 15-18 July 1983

Thornton, A.P. - 'The Decline of British Power in the Middle East' in *The end of European Empire: Decolonization after World War III*, ed. Tony Smith (D.C. Heath & Co., London, 1975), pp. 60-72

Watt, D.C. - 'Labor Relations and Trades Unionism in Aden, 1952-1960', *The Middle East Journal*, vol. 16, no. 4, Autumn 1962, pp. 443-56

Willis, John - 'Colonial Policing in Aden, 1937-1967', *Arab Studies Journal*, Spring 1997